HE EMERGENCE OF MONARCHY IN NORTH INDIA

(c. 8th-4th CENTURIES B. C.)

AS REFLECTED IN THE BRAHMANICAL TRADITION

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. I certify that no portion of this thesis has previously been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of this or any other University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
ADS	Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra
AGS	Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra
ApGS	Āpastamba Gṛhya Sūtra
ApSS	Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra
ASS	Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra
AV	Atharva Veda
BAU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
BDS	Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra
BSS	Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
GDS	Gautama Dharma Sūtra
IED	A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages
JB	Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa
KGS	Khādira Gṛhya Sūtra
LSS	Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra
MBH	Mahābhārata
PED	The Pali Text Society's Pali English Dictionary
PGS	Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtra
PSED	The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary
PVB	Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa
RAM	Rāmāyaṇa
RV	Ṛg Veda
SB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SED	A Sanskrit English Dictionary
SGS	Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra
SSS	Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra

TS	Taittirīya Saṁhitā
VDS	Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra
VI	Vedic Index

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND THE CONTEXT

> O grandfather Bhārata, tell me how this word rāja, which is so prevalent, originated. (The rāja) has hands, head, neck, back, arms, stomach, intellect, and senses, and is as prone to grief and joy as any one of us (and yet) how does he alone protect the entire earth, full of noble and brave men, and why do people desire to earn his favour?
>
> Yudhiṣṭhira to Bhīṣma in the Śānti Parvan.

I

The origin and acceptance of monarchy, the problem which intrigued Yudhiṣṭhira, continues to attract the attention of present-day historians. This is partly owing to the recognition of the "centrality of power and authority in shaping the course of a society" (Saberwal 1984:2).[1] Such a recognition points to the need to identify and analyse crucial political institutions through which relations of power and authority are structured in specific societies. In the early Indian context monarchy has by

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[1] Power has been defined as "the capacity to influence another person's behavioral attitudes by moral persuasion, threat, force or control over resources" (Adams 1975:12). The distinguishing feature of authority is legitimacy (Peabody 1968: 474). Secondly, it is exercised "most characteristically in a network of clearly defined hierarchical roles" (ibid.). In concrete situations, "it is rare to find power that is either largely legitimate or largely illegitimate because its exercise is normally so double-edged" (Mann 1986:7).

and large been regarded as the ideal political institution[2] in the dominant tradition.[3] We will focus in particular on the emergence of monarchy in north India from c.8th to 4th centuries B.C.[4]

The significance of the area and period under consideration is widely recognised,[5] and it is well-established that important changes occurred within the time-space framework outlined above. These include the growing importance of settled agriculture[6]

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[2]Apart from monarchy, a wide range of political arrangements are recognised in early literature. These include the gaṇa-saṁghas, often equated with oligarchies or republics. However, it is significant that even within the Buddhist tradition, which reflects considerable sympathy for the gaṇa-saṁghas, the ideal polity is conceived of not as an oligarchy but as a monarchy under the sway of the cakkavattin or universal ruler, as for instance in the Cakkavatti Sīhanāda Suttanta (Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1977:59-76).

[3]The dominant tradition need not necessarily be manifest only in what are explicitly works of political theorists. In fact, to be effective, other media are frequently utilised. Thus, with reference to the Rāmāyaṇa, Thapar observes (1980:664-665): "It is significant that the rendering of the text into regional languages tends to coincide with the establishment of strong monarchical kingdoms on an extensive scale in the same areas. The translations therefore, apart from the religious message of propagating the cult of Viṣṇu, were also a subtle means of eulogising the monarchical state." This is not surprising, given the "centrality of the ruler to orderly society" (Brockington 1984:124) reflected in the epic.

[4]For a detailed discussion on the geographical and chronological framework, see Appendix I and II respectively.

[5]For instance Thapar (1984) focuses on "social formations in the mid-first millenium B.C. in the Ganga valley."

[6]As Mann (1986:42) observes, "fixed settlement traps people into living with each other, cooperating and devising complex forms of social organisation. The metaphor of a cage is appropriate " (italics original). However, the nature of social organisation which emerges is likely to vary substantially according to the specificites of each situation. For instance, the cultivation of small plots by households may lead to the emergence of peasant proprietors, whereas more extensive cultivation requiring social co-operation, may prevent the development of exclusionary ownership (ibid.:51).

associated with the use of iron tools.[7] While iron technology in itself did not "cause" socio-political transformations, it opened up possibilities which were exploited within a specific historical context. The archaeological evidence also indicates a remarkable increase in the number of settlements, reflecting significant demographic changes.[8] This was possibly accompanied by an increasing interaction amongst the inhabitants of the area, apparent in the spread of the PGW through the Ganga-Yamuna doab and beyond. The PGW has been recovered from as many as 650 sites (Makkhan Lal 1984:55). While in many cases the PGW level marks the beginning of the settlement, it is also found stratified above late Harappan (e.g., Alamgirpur), Ochre Coloured Pottery (e.g., Hastinapur), and Black-and-Red ware (e.g., Atranjikhera)

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[7] The importance of iron technology in stimulating historical change has been variously assessed. According to Chakrabarti (1985:84) "the beginning of iron was a low process and unlikely to have directly led to what has been called the 'second urbanisation' in the Gangetic valley." A.Ghosh (1973:10), while agreeing that "the metal did not produce any spirt in the material prosperity of the society," points out that this was, nonetheless, "the period when political janapadas were being formed" (ibid.), indicating the contemporaneity of the two developments although denying any processual links between the two. Such connections have been emphasised by scholars such as R.S.Sharma (e.g., 1983a:105) who focuses on the wide-ranging implications and possibilities inherent in the use of iron technology. Broadly, he associates the use of iron with the development and intensification of agriculture in the Ganga valley. This was made possible through the use of iron axes for clearing the dense forests of the region, thus permitting the extension of the area under cultivation, and through the development of the iron ploughshare, especially useful for plcughing the heavy alluvial soil of the area effectively. The possibility of agricultural expansion thus opened up is thought to have provided the basis for a wide range of socio-political changes, including social stratification, the emergence of the state, and the growth of urban centres.

[8] The archaeological evidence relevant to the area and the period under consideration includes that of the Painted Grey Ware (henceforth PGW) culture and the Northern Black Polished Ware (henceforth NBP) culture. In an analysis of the PGW and NBP sites of the Kanpur district, Makkhan Lal (1989:49) suggests that population may have more tham doubled from the first phase to the second (i.e., between c.800 and 500 B.C.) rising from an average of 2.35 per sq km to 6.15 per sq km. At the same time the average distance between settlements decreased from 13 kms tc 9 kms.

levels (ibid.:57). Each of these cultures was associated with distinctive subsistence strategies[9] and specific socio-cultural ideals, the latter being most clearly reflected in the pottery itself. Hence the spread of the PGW may indicate growing contact amongst the peoples associated with these cultures and the consequent evolution of a composite socio-political structure.[10]

Textual sources, moreover, provide us with a means of understanding this and related processes.[11] Amongst the crucial changes discernible are the "transition to class society and state formation" (R.S.Sharma 1983b:34) related to which was a changing definition of power which "became less an instrumental value

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[9]For instance the evidence from Atranjikhera indicates that rice, barley, gram, and khesari were associated with OCP levels, while the BRW levels yielded evidence of rice and moong, whereas the PGW levels were associated with rice, wheat, and barley (Gaur 1983). Structural remains associated with each level also show important variations (ibid.).

[10]The emergence of a stratified socio-political structure is also reflected in the distribution of the PGW vis-a-vis other pottery types. It has been estimated that the PGW constitutes between 3 to 10 % of the entire pottery assemblage at any given site (Makkhan Lal 1984:57). Given the fact that this was a de luxe ware and that the PGW shapes were replicated in other coarser fabrics, socio-economic and political differences amongst the inhabitants of such settlements seem apparent.

[11]These are in fact "topics on which archaeology is most reticent, such as religious beliefs and political ideas "(Allchin and Allchin 1983:316). This is not to deny the potential of archaeology to answer such questions. As Miller (1989:76) points out, archaeology can be particularly useful in providing us with information about dominated groups and classes which figure only indirectly in the textual sources which generally reflect the perspective of the dominant groups. Brumfiel (1989:132) suggests that archaeological evidence may provide data on processes such as factional struggles. It is also likely that archaeological investigations may provide information on "bread and circuses," the palliatives offered by dominant groups to the dominated (Kus 1989:152). However, given the state of knowledge about PGW levels at present, such possibilities are difficult to explore.

(viewed from the perspective of the collectivity as a whole) and, increasingly an end in itself, the basis of a hierarchy of privilege" (Drekmeier 1962:93). These changes were reflected initially, in the development of an elaborate sacrificial ritual (Ghoshal 1966b: 21) which gradually gave way to a multi-layered system of legitimation.

Scholars analysing the emergence of monarchy in this context have long been aware of its complex nature. As Law (1960:94) pointed out:

> The 'rise of kingship' being a single expression does not in a strict logical sense stand for a single effect from a single cause. It is a general expression for several phenomena which from the logical standpoint are different and attributable to different totalities of conditions.

However, if the problem is complex, it is also true that it has been studied in detail by a number of historians over the past century or so.

Modern (late 19th and 20th century) studies of the early Indian polity have, to a great extent, been related to the contemporary socio-political context, as has been recognised by R.S.Sharma (1968:1) and Thapar (1978:1-25). Sharma in fact specifically suggests that the post-1857 period witnessed the beginning of serious investigations into India's past as the British felt the need to acquire more knowledge about their subjects on the assumption that ignorance in this respect had contributed to the upsurge of 1857. More generally, the context from which such studies emerged was one of colonialism and in a sense European, particularly British interest in the Indian past, and the use made of what was known of it, conditioned scholars working on this theme.

Western scholarship on India may be broadly divided into two strands (Thapar 1978) typified by the Orientalists and the Utilitarians respectively. The former strand is possibly best represented by Max Muller, who romanticised certain aspects of the past, especially those associated with the "pristine Aryan civilisation." While this was to a certain extent detrimental, as an idealised picture of the past gained widespread currency, Max Muller also contributed substantially by editing and translating numerous Sanskrit texts, leading to a dissemination of information about sources available for historical studies.

If the Orientalists treated some aspects of India's past with a certain amount of respect, the Utilitarian approach as exemplified in the work of Mill (1858) was one of criticism and contempt. The reconstruction of the past which emerged from this perspective, very often as inaccurate as the Orientalist version, was extremely powerful, as it served an obvious political purpose in justifying the imposition of British rule--if India's past was dismal, the British could justifiably be proud of shouldering the "white man's burden" and "civilising" those entrusted to their custody.[12]

Neither of these approaches was strictly speaking historical, as both concentrated on using data from Indian history (often rather uncritically) in order to prove a point, rather than attempt

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[12] It may be noted that even the Orientalist perspective was related to the contemporary socio-political situation. For instance, Orientalists such as Jones undertook the study of Indian languages to cope with the practical problems of governing an alien people, while less hard-headed scholars such as Max Muller often tended to glorify early Indian institutions as a reaction to the contemporary situation in Europe, somewhat inadvertently contributing to the myth of the Aryan race in the process.

to arrive at an understanding of the past. Further, both tended to ignore or minimise, for different reasons, the existence of political institutions in early India. Thus, Max Muller (1968:31), in an attempt to idealise the past, wrote:

> The Hindus were a nation of philosophers. Their struggles were the struggles of thought; their past, the problem of creation; their future, the problem of existence... It might therefore be justly said that India has no place in the political history of the world.

From a different perspective, Mill (1858:117) argued that Hindu culture and civilisation were worthless and static.[13] What is noteworthy is that both approaches denied, for different reasons, the possibilities of political development in early India.

It is within this intellectual background that the earliest modern Indian writing on this theme has to be viewed.[14] At the outset it must be noted that the very approach of focusing on early Indian political ideas and institutions marked a crucial breakthrough, opening up a new area of investigation which had been hitherto ignored. This was obviously, and very often explicitly, linked to the emergence of the national movement (R.S.Sharma 1968:3)--for instance, Altekar (1962:iv), in the preface to the first edition of his work entitled State and Government in Ancient India, which appeared in1949, hoped that his work would provide "lessons for the present," that is, for the Indian government of the post-independence era.

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[13] The Hindu texts were dismissed as the creation of a rude nation (Mill 1858:107) while Hindus were described as "remarkably prone to flattery...while men are still ignorant and unreflecting" (ibid.:324).

[14] For the present purpose, we have grouped both pre-independence and post-independence nationalist writers in a single category, owing to the common perspective which underlies such works. Besides, we have attempted to provide an illustrative rather than an exhaustive survey.

Another development, significant from the point of view of historiography, was that most of the scholars within this tradition posited the existence of a golden age in the remote past, and implicitly or explicitly grappled with the notion of historical change. Very often, changes were simply documented rather than explained.[15] Nevertheless, the awareness of such changes was a useful corrective to the western view of India's past as static and unchanging.

The new approach also resulted in a revaluation and systematisation of an enormous amount of textual data, laying the basis for later works on the theme. This led to a search for old manuscripts, and to the discovery of the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya in 1905, which has been described as "an epoch-making event in the history of the study of ancient Indian polity" (R.S.Sharma 1968:4). In a sense, nationalist scholars were following in the footsteps of the Orientalists, but at the same time, by re-examining Sanskrit texts, and by discovering new sources, they were offering a successful challenge to the Orientalist notion of an unchanging, idyllic past.

The close relationship between the national movement and historians, which was in a sense inevitable given the role of the urban intelligentsia in the former,[16] was thus, to a certain

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[15] See for instance Altekar (1962:309).

[16] For instance R.S.Sharma (1968:5) argues that the fact that K.P.Jayaswal "was made to resign his post in the post-graduate teaching department of Calcutta University by the Bengal Government in 1912-13 might suggest that he was considered a potential contributor to the 'seminaries of sedition'." He also correlates the number and nature of works on early Indian polity with various phases of the national movement.

extent, fruitful. Nevertheless, it created problems as well. These were partly related to the fact that many of these works were in the nature of a reaction to western conceptions about Indian political institutions or the lack of them. Thus Ghoshal (1966b:9-13) has an entire section entitled "Some Criticisms of Ancient Indian Political Ideas Considered" devoted to criticising the views of western scholars on this theme.[17] While such criticisms were very oftem valid, they were limited by the fact that Indian scholars attempted to challenge individual elements of western historical (or ahistorical) constructions, rather than question the entire framework. For instance, Ghoshal (ibid.) challenges Bloomfield's (1972:4-5) notion that the institution of āśramas made men indifferent to political and social developments, but does not attempt to contextualise the evolution of the institution and develop an alternative analysis of it.

More pernicious was the tendency to eulogise the past. In part this was an understandable reaction to Utilitarian attempts to devalue it, but the misuse of historical data for ideological purposes once again contributed to preventing the development of a more objective historical understanding.

Such attempts to glorify the past very often postulated the existence of an independent Indian intellectual tradition, evident in the view that the "Indians belong to the category of peoples who have left their impress upon the pages of history as the founders of original systems of thought" (Ghoshal 1966b:3). The same opinion was occasionally couched in communal or racist terms.

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[17] Similar criticisms are also voiced by Bhandarkar (1963).

Thus Jayaswal (1943:3) suggests that "the Hindu race has experimented in great and various systems of state and political machinery." As a result of such notions, the explanations offered for the emergence of political ideas and institutions often border on the mystical, being attributed in some instances to the "essential genius" of Indians (Ghoshal 1966b:3).

Very often, moreover, explanations tended to degenerate into apologies or justifications. This was especially true where institutions which did not appear desirable from the present perspective were discovered. Such apologies often took the form of pointing out similar developments in the west. For instance, in discussing the emergence of monarchy in early India, Altekar (1962:377) finds comfort in the fact that:

> This phenomenon was not peculiar to ancient India; it repeated itself in ancient Europe also, where we find the republics in Greece and Italy being gradually supplanted by monarchies and empires.

The search for and the creation of a glorious past also occasionally resulted in ahistorical attempts to establish equations between early Indian institutions and 19th or 20th century ones, claiming priority for the former. This led to such absurdities as the discovery of the concept of the welfare state in the Smrtis (Ghoshal 1966b:4) and the description of early Hindu kingship as national (Jayaswal 1943:220). Such unjustified claims unfortunately vitiated serious scholarship.

Inevitably, the attempts to establish the priority of Indian institutions resulted in a certain amount of analytical confusion, as early, and probably specifically Indian concepts were reduced to what were regarded as their western equivalents. This is reflected

in the virtually uniform translation of the term rājā[18] as king and rājya as kingdom (e.g., Ghoshal 1966b:20) irrespective of context[19] ignoring changes in the significance of such terms which emerge when reductionist tendencies are avoided.[20]

Despite its limitations, the nationalist historiographical tradition proved extremely influential, as is clear from an examination of post-independence, source-based studies of the Brāhmaṇas and Śrauta Sūtras, such as those of Basu (1969), R.N.Sharma (1977), and Ram Gopal (1983). Such works exemplify both the strengths and the weaknesses of this tradition. On the one hand, they are extremely informative and descriptive, tapping extant textual evidence fully for this purpose, but on the other hand, they tend to idealise and decontextualise the past. Thus, in his search for modern equivalents, Basu (1969:xxix) equates the purohita with the Prime Minister.

The tendency to idealise the past is also evident in R.N. Sharma's (1977:61) statement that:

> The people led a peaceful life with ample to eat and wear. The needs of the people were very meagre as compared to today. It was due to their simple living and high thinking...

this in a study based on the Śrauta Sūtras.[21] One cannot help but

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[18] Apart from the term rājā, which is commonly used in English in the nominative form, we will use the unconjugated stems for other Sanskrit terms, except where entire phrases are cited.

[19] Other examples include Altekar's (1962:37) rendering of bhoja as feudatory and virāj as not-king (ibid.:39) in the later Vedic context.

[20] For a discussion of such possibilities, see Chapters II-IV.

[21] Carried to extremes, such scholarship resulted in amazing formulations such as the following: "A Śūdra is not made a Śūdra by the society, but he is a Śūdra because he could not, on account of his own weakness or idleness, choose for himself a respectable place" (Veda Mitra 1969:3).

wonder whether a society in which rites to ensure success in battle were prescribed can justifiably be regarded as peaceful. Further, the elaborate sacrificial ritual envisaged in the Śrauta Sūtras, with various material prerequisites and acknowledged goals of material prosperity, certainly does not suggest simple living, even as an ideal. Elsewhere, R.N.Sharma (ibid.:57) suggests that there was "complete social harmony among the four constituents of the then existing society." If this was indeed the case, there would have been no need to devise rites by means of which the brahma and the kṣatra could dominate the viś and occasionally the śūdra.[22]

Such works also tend to idealise specifically political institutions and relations, some authors arguing for the existence of cordiality between the ruler and ruled (e.g., Basu 1969:xxix). Consequently, the evidence for tension which is often explicit in the brahmanical tradition is glossed over, and the problems inherent in the nationalist tradition remain unresolved in such works.

While such approaches have been of limited value, recent decades have witnessed a fruitful exploration of alternative possibilities, both in India and the west. Western scholarship has been enriched through the sociological insights of scholars such as Drekmeier (1962) and Dumont (1970) on the one hand and the anthropological and linguistic studies of Heesterman (1957) and Gonda (1969) on the other.

To a certain extent, such works continue the earlier orientalist tradition of attempting to learn from the east.

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[22] Examples of such rituals are discussed in subsequent chapters.

For Drekmeier (1962:2) for example:

> A knowledge of primitive cultures and ancient civilisations is of particular value in focusing our attention on the significance of myth in giving meaning and purpose to life, in explaining the fact of death and catastrophe, and in holding groups of men together.[23]

Nevertheless, Drekmeier (ibid.) does recognise the need to locate religious and political ideas and institutions within a socio-economic context, although he points out the problems inherent in establishing a simplistic connection between the two.

The second theme which runs through many of these works is an attempt to "see the world through the eyes of the Vedic Indian himself" (Heesterman 1957:5). While the problems of this are recognised, as for instance by Drekmeier (1962:4), the perspective is valuable in at least consciously eschewing tendencies to use the past to argue about the present. Nevertheless, the idea of turning to the east in search of answers to fundamental questions of human existence, referred to above, often conditions such reconstructions both in terms of the data selected for analysis and in terms of the interpretations offered.

Heesterman's (1957) analysis of the rājasūya illustrates some of these tendencies. According to him, the rājasūya represents the re-enactment of a cosmic drama, of "birth and death, integration and disintegration, ascension and descent" (ibid.:6). While such an analysis may be valid to a certain extent, given the fact that a complex ritual such as the rājasūya would have obviously operated at a number of levels, the constant search for symbols of cosmic regeneration makes Heesterman's study somewhat tedious and lopsided, and the social context, which is often explicitly manipulated in the course of the sacrifice, is ignored.

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[23] Dumont (1970:87-88) likewise attempts to learn from an analysis of Indian institutions.

Some of these works, moreover, tend to be ahistorical, sometimes explicitly so. Thus Gonda (1969) summarises the data on kingship from a range of sources, without attempting to trace the historical development of the institution, while Dumont (1970:62) explicitly avoids a historical analysis.

Despite these limitations, however, such works have been valuable in recognising the significance of the dominant religious/ ritual tradition in early Indian history. This revaluation has been particularly useful because it opens up new possibilities of exploring this tradition as a whole, instead of using the data from this to argue for or against various positions.

Attempts to evolve alternative, specifically historical approaches by Indian scholars have also proved to be extremely fruitful. Two outstanding contributions to the analysis of the theme have been by R.S.Sharma (1968,1989) and Thapar (1984). Both historians locate the emergence and development of political institutions within what is viewed as a changing socio-economic context, of, broadly speaking, greater differentiation. This perspective marks a fundamental, conscious break with the earlier historiographical tradition in attempting to understand the past as a dynamic rather than as a static system. Further, methodologically, the earlier dependence on textual analysis has been substantially supplemented by the use of anthropological, sociological, and above all, archaeological tools and data.[24] As a result, our understanding of early Indian political processes has been considerably enriched.

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[24] See for instance R.S.Sharma's (1983a:106) utilisation of archaeological data such as the de luxe NBP ware and the presence of semi-precious beads to argue for the emergence of social stratification c. 6th century B.C.

Nevertheless, certain aspects of the social context remain relatively unexplored. These pertain in particular to issues such as kinship and gender. Recent ethno-historical studies such as that of Gailey (1987) point to the existence of crucial links between changes in the kinship structure and the emergence of political institutions such as kingship, related to the growing demands on the produce of kin communities to meet the requirements of the state machinery. The examination of such possibilities is useful in providing insight into the context of political processes. It also enables us to focus on the links between the emergence of the state and changes in the economy and gender and kinship relationships, formulated by Engels (1884/1972) over a century ago.[25] These possibilities have been explored, refined, and occasionally challenged in the context of early civilisations such as Mesopotamia (Rohrlich 1980, Lerner 1986) and in Gailey's (1987) study of Tonga.[26]

Related in part to this shift in focus of political analyses, at another level, the last decade in particular has witnessed a number of attempts to analyse the nature of power and define domination, sharpening our understanding of political processes. This is evident, for instance, in the notion of power as implying a dynamic relationship between the dominant and the dominated (Miller 1989:64). Specifically, people who have either willingly or unwillingly surrendered power to leaders retain, in most situations, some option of either withdrawing these powers or of moving

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[25]The links Engels envisaged were far-reaching, attempting "to relate men and women, town and country, kinship and state, forms of property, systems of land tenure, convertibility of wealth, forms of exchange, the technology of food production, and forms of trade, to name a few, into a systematic historical account" (Rubin 1975:210).

[26]More general critiques of Engels's work are available in Sacks (1975), Lane (1976), and Bloch (1985).

away from the spheres of power which emerge (Mann 1986:67). The complex nature of power in any social situation is also suggested, for instance, in Mann's (1986:6) identification of four major sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political.[27] The fact that these need not coincide contributes to the process of historical change.[28] In any given situation, moreover, power includes "distributive and collective, exploitative and functional" elements (Mann 1986:6).[29] Besides, power may appear as either authoritative power operating through definite commands, requiring conscious obedience, or as diffused power which "typically comprises, not command and obedience, but an understanding that these practices are natural or moral or result from self-evident common interest," (ibid.:8) or as a combination of both elements. There has also been a growing awareness of the fact that power "is an aspect of nearly all social relationships" and that politics refers to "the distribution, maintenance, and the exercise of and struggle for power within a social unit" (Cohen 1979:85).

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[27] Runciman's (1982:361) definition of power is somewhat similar: "The powers of any and all rulers derive from some combination of (1) possession of or control over the sources and distribution of wealth and therewith the ability to offer or withhold the means of subsistence, (2) attribution by subjects and/or fellow-citizens of superior honour or prestige whether deriving from sacred or secular personal or institutional charisma, and therewith the ability to attract and retain a following, and (3) command of the technical and organisational means of physical coercion and therewith the ability to impose obedience by force."

[28] For instance, Mann (1986:67) points out that "elites have rarely been unitary. Elders, lineage heads, bigmen, and chiefs have possessed overlapping, competitive authorities, viewed one another suspiciously..."

[29] Distributive power refers to the uneven distribution of power within social networks, where power benefits some as opposed to others, whereas collective power, as its very name suggests, refers to the power exercised by all participants in such relations.

At the same time, there has been a growing interest in the means of communication, so essential for the effective exercise of power.[30] Such analyses of power relations have led tc a re-examination of the nature of institutions such as the family. In fact, it is now widely recognised that the family serves as an important mechanism for sccialisation and is a crucial means of social reproduction.[31] As Millett (1970:33) observes:

> Serving as the agent of the larger sccicty, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family head.

However, most scholars who have focused on the emergence of political institutions in early India have avoided discussing such connections. For instance, very few historians consider it even worth their while to discuss the political roles assigned to women, the reasons for their exclusion from positions of power, including kingship, and its significance. One of the few histcrians to refer in passing tc the fact that wcmen were debarred from exercising political authority is Anjaria (1935:225) who states that:

> Besides the lower classes in scciety... women were also debarred from the privilege (or shall we call it the duty?) of interesting themselves and sharing in the tasks of government.

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[30] As Mann (1986:136) observes, "without effective passing of messages, personnel, and resources, there can be no power."

[31] Social reproduction "includes not only the reproduction of the labour force through birth or acquisition, but also maintenance activities, socialization, and the replication of the ideological and political means of ensuring the continuation of class domination" (Gailey and Patterson 1988:78). Even in non-stratified sccieties, "the concept of reproduction...must weld eight elements--the production, consumption, distribution and exchange of things on the one hand; the production, consumption, distribution and exchange of people on the other--into a structural whole" (Gregory 1982:30).

Even when there is evidence for the involvement of women in explicitly politico-ritual processes, very little effort is made to understand the significance of their role or of any changes this underwent. This was inevitable, given the reluctance to recognise, let alone analyse, the participation of women in such processes. For instance, in the context of the ratninām havīmśi, Ghoshal (1957:306) observes that:

> we have...no other choice than to accept the position that the chief queen and other queens occupied a high official position in the Vedic state (italics mine).

In the same context, Law (1960:89) proceeds to analyse the list of ratnins after excluding the women, viz., the mahisī, vāvātā, and parivrktī, considering them as personnel "whom we need not notice for our purposes." R.S.Sharma (1968:147) is clearly somewhat exceptional in attempting to analyse their position, suggesting that their participation represents the survival of tribal, matriarchal elements, which were absorbed within a patriarchal framework. Elsewhere (ibid.:63) he discusses the notion that "property, family and caste played primary and vital role in the rise of the state in ancient India," as reflected in Hindu and Buddhist political theories. Nevertheless, the connections between the development of gender stratification and changes in the kinship structure have been by and large ignored.

An exploration of such connections is nonetheless important from the point of view of understanding how the emergence of political power (reflected in the ability to control one's own and other's lives) manifests itself and operates at various levels, and it is hoped that this will broaden our understanding of socio-political processes.

II

The need for a fresh examination of some aspects of the emergence of political authority, specifically monarchy in north India, is, to a certain extent, interwoven with the specific nature of the textual sources we propose to utilise for the purpose. These texts are primarily brahmanical works composed during the period under consideration, viz., the principal Brāhmaṇas and Śrauta Sūtras. We will be supplementing these with the earlier Ṛg Veda and the later Gṛhya Sūtras and Dharma Sūtras wherever possible.

The Brāhmaṇas are amongst the earliest prose works available in Sanskrit, so-called because they were composed by and for brāhmaṇas (Max Muller 1968:153).[32] While the basic aim was to "connect the sacrificial formulae and songs with rituals" (Sastry 1968:240), they incorporate a wide range of related material as well. These include speculation on the mantras or chants, theological and philosophical material, including the beginnings of upanisadic literature, discussions on grammar and etymology, and the use of various metres (Basu 1969:ii, Macdonell 1972:204).

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[32] Gonda (1975:341) however suggests that they were so-called because they represent "'comment upon brahman' i.e., the Veda." Winternitz (1981:174-75) observes that the "word 'Brāhmaṇa' (neutral) means primarily an 'explanation or expression of a learned priest, a doctor of sacrificial science on some point of the ritual.' Used collectively this word denotes then a collection of such pronouncements and discussions of the priests of the science of sacrifice." In a footnote in the same context he adds that: "The etymology of the word is doubtful. It can be derived from either brāhman (neuter) meaning 'holy speech, prayer, holy knowledge,' or brahmān (masculine) meaning 'priest' in general or 'Brāhmin priest' or also from brāhmaṇa (masculine) 'the Brahmin,' the member of the priestly caste, 'the theologian.'"

Despite the wide range of materials incorporated in the Brāhmaṇas, the fundamental preoccupation with the sacrificial ritual is evident.[33] In fact, "they reflect the spirit of an age in which all the intellectual activity is concentrated on the sacrifice" (Macdonell 1972:204). We would suggest that this position of centrality which is assigned to the sacrifice is of chronological significance as well, as the sacrifice, in particular the major śrauta sacrifices such as the rājasūya and the aśvamedha, become important during a particular phase in the brahmanical tradition and later decline in importance.

The composition of the sūtras marks the beginning of a new phase in the brahmanical tradition. The word sūtra literally means thread. This term is used to denote both the complete work as well as the sentences and paragraphs which go into its composition, on the analogy of weaving (Gonda 1977:465). The typical characteristic of the mature sūtra works is the compression of as much information and as many instructions in as few words as possible. However, this characteristic is less evident in earlier works, which contain Brāhmaṇa-like passages, whereas in later works, the tendency to save even half a syllable is more marked.[34] The sutra style was employed in a number of compositions, both religious and secular.

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[33] As Gonda (1975:339) observes: "The practically all-powerful sacrificial (śrauta) rites are the one and only theme from which all discussions start and on which everything including the secondary themes hinges."

[34] The importance assigned to the development of a cryptic style is evident from the statement attributed to Patañjali that the joy of a sūtra author on saving half a syllable is equal to what he experiences on the birth of a son (Winternitz 1981:250).

The Śrauta Sūtras deal, as their very name suggests, with the śrauta ritual, i.e., with the ceremonies revealed in the Vedas and considered to be of divine origin. The texts themselves, however, unlike preceding literature, were not considered as revealed, but were ascribed to sūtrakāras, literally the makers of sūtras, human authors, often "shadowy figures" (Gonda 1977:475).

Given the fact that both the Śrauta Sūtras and the Brāhmaṇas were explicitly concerned with Vedic ritual, it is evident that these two categories of texts are, in a sense, complementary. As Gonda (1977:497) observes, "the brāhmaṇas and the śrauta sūtras discuss the same liturgy but from entirely different angles," the purpose of the Śrauta Sūtras being to present a "systematic description of every ritual in its natural sequence" (ibid.) while the Brāhmaṇas are devoted to explanations of controversial injunctions. This difference in perspective leads to differences in content as well, the Śrauta Sūtras prescribing "more incidental rites and expiations than are found in the brāhmaṇas" (ibid.:499). In terms of the performance of the ritual too, knowledge of the Śrauta Sūtras was of crucial importance, and "no one could learn the ceremonial from the hymns and Brāhmaṇas alone, without the help of the sūtras" (Max Muller 1968:166).

Despite the obvious relationship between the Brāhmaṇas and the Śrauta Sūtras, the priority of the former is evident from the fact that "no Sūtra is ever quoted in any of the Brāhmaṇas, but there is no collection of Sūtras in which the various Śākhās of the Brāhmaṇas are not referred to by name" (ibid.:172). However, it is likely that the earliest sūtra works are more or less contemporary with the latest Brāhmaṇas.

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According to a number of scholars (Max Muller 1968:230-32, Drekmeier 1962:35, Macdonell 1972:246, B.K.Ghosh 1942:219), these texts were produced as part of the brahmanical reaction to the emergence of Buddhism. However, while the rise of Buddhism may have stimulated discussion on certain issues such as asceticism, it does not explain the composition of sūtra literature as such very adequately.

An alternative explanation has been proposed by scholars such as Winternitz (1981:250), Gonda (1977:465), and Ram Gopal (1983:1), according to whom the sūtras arose out of a need to systematise a "growing mass of details preserved in circles of specialists in some branch of traditional knowledge" (Gonda 1977: 465) for practical purposes in order to facilitate memorisation. This view seems to be plausible in the context of an oral tradition.[35]

From our point of view, these texts are significant as they form part of a coherent and connected tradition. In other words, while each of the categories of texts enumerated above is associated with specific, typical characteristics, nevertheless, considered as a group, they possess a certain unity as well. As they are all part of the brahmanical tradition, they presuppose a belief in certain common premises. The weight assigned to any

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[35] Certain other explanations such as that of Banerji (1962:8) who suggests that with the growth of civilisation in the post-Vedic period people descended from the spiritual level to a material plane and that this descent necessitated the systematisation of rituals through the sūtras, are rather unsatisfactory, as it is more than evident that the Vedic people were as materialistic as their successors. Similarly, R.N.Sharma (1977:180) holds that the sūtras originated from an attempt to link each and every god with some sacrifice or the other and to increase the importance of the brāhmaṇas by making the sacrifices more complicated. While this may, to some extent, explain the changing content of the Śrauta Sūtras when compared to the Brāhmaṇas, it does not seem to be an adequate explanation for the changing literary form.

particular premise might vary over a period of time, and the form in which the belief is made explicit is also liable to change. However, a certain underlying unity is evident. To cite an elementary example of this, the brahmanical texts uniformly assume that members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa are superior to those of other varṇas. However, the form in which this is expressed varies--for instance, in the Brāhmaṇas, considerable emphasis is laid on the ritual status of the brāhmaṇas while in the Dharma Sūtras the claims are wider and include economic and legal privileges. In our opinion, this underlying stratum of common beliefs running through the texts enables us to treat them as comparable and hence the changes revealed can be fruitfully studied.

Secondly, these texts were conceived of, to a great extent, as instruments with which to influence, control, direct, and understand some of the processes we will be examining, providing for the institutionalisation of ideas relating to power.[36] In particular, much of what is prescribed in the texts served to legitimise many of the significant changes which were occurring. The importance of legitimation for the emergence of political authority cannot be over-emphasised. Legitimation gives both those who are governed and those who govern the feeling that government has a right to govern (Sternberger 1968:244). In fact, "ideological representations are integral to relations of power and control" (Bender 1989:93). Hence the means of legitimation used and the changes the forms of legitimation undergo require careful examination.

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[36] As Saberwal (1983:30) observes, ideas are much more effective when they are institutionalised rather than when they exist as abstract ideas.

More specifically, the texts provide information on the means of religious legitimation which were evolved. Religious legitimation can take a variety of forms, including belief in the divinity of the ruler, in the divine nature of kingship and other political institutions, or in the divine vocation of the ruler. However, to adopt any one of the forms to the exclusion of the others is necessarily restrictive. Further, any emphasis on the divine character of the ruler alone would widen the disjunction between the ruler and the ruled, whereas for legitimation to be successful, it is necessary to focus on both the conjunction and the disjunction between the ruler and the ruled. In our opinion, the brahmanical tradition recognises this problem and tries to overcome it by widening the basis of monarchy, relating it to other emerging social hierarchies on the one hand, and relating these hierarchies to one another on the other.[37] Thus an attempt was made to arrive at an interrelated whole, with the ruler as a focus of unity within the complex.

In a sense then, the texts under consideration illustrate the creation or evolution of what Berger (1969:53) characterises as a theodicy, i.e., a means of explaining or justifying phenomena in terms of religious beliefs (ibid.:59):

> Theodicies may serve as legitimations both for the powerful and the powerless, for the privileged and for the deprived... In both cases, the result is one of world-maintenance and, very concretely, of the maintenance of a particular institutional order (italics original).

Features which characterise a theodicy very often include a tendency to "discover" parallels between the divine and the human plane. This is explicitly recognised in the notion of "men being

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[37] In fact, "the hierarchical ordering of society lies at the very basis of the Hindu state" (Anjaria 1935:210).

after the manner of gods" (Eggeling 1963d:160-61, SB 9.1.1.19). Such parallels serve to endow human institutions with an element of immortality (Berger 1969:38). Further, religious legitimation attempts to locate the present moment within past traditions. Such history may be fictitious, but nonetheless, it is real for those who participate in its creation or recreation through ritual (ibid.:41). As such, the relationship between religious legitimation and the socio-political structures or institutions which are legitimated is crucial.[38] Sanctity, in fact, very often serves "to transform the arbitrary into the necessary, and to portray to the individual the needs and interests of society and his/her own needs" (Knapp 1988:162).[39]

Legitimation, moreover, is necessary only in a situation where the facticity of the social order is challenged (Berger 1969:31), and is essential both as an offensive mechanism against those who challenge the system and as a means of defence to strengthen the beliefs of those who attempt to uphold it. Hence, legitimation is a dynamic process, reflected, to a certain extent, in the brahmanical tradition under discussion.

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[38] Berger (1969:48) also argues that in some cases the religious tradition may assume a certain autonomy in relation to social processes.

[39] Very often, ideologies codify social relations "as grounded in the essence of the universe--in the nature of nature, the nature of human nature, and the nature of society" (Wolf 1982:389).

As noted earlier, the texts under consideration focus primarily on rituals, which probably constituted one of the most important mechanisms of legitimation.[40] To be effective, moreover, rituals are primarily communicative in nature. Thus

> Ritual action...serves to express the status of the actor vis-a-vis his environment, both physical and social; it may also serve to alter the status of the actor. When ritual functions in the latter sense, it is a manifestation of power (Leach 1968:525-526).

It has been suggested (Turner 1969:10) that in certain situations there may be a correlation between "a multiplicity of conflict situations" and a "high frequency of ritual performance." In view of this possibility what is significant is that many of the rituals discussed in the texts grapple with problems of social and political hierarchy, attempting to evolve a certain degree of uniformity in this field, which would have been relevant only in a situation where such hierarchies in general or the specific ordering within a particular hierarchy was challenged. In other words, the rituals reflect the immanent aspects of ideology which ensure

> the strengthening of the internal morale of some existing social group by giving it a sense of ultimate significance and meaning in the cosmos, by reinforcing its normative solidarity, and by giving it common ritual and aesthetic practices (Mann 1986:519).

Much of the ritual literature utilised for the present study focuses on the use of symbols in the cult and discusses their meanings. Each such symbol can in fact be interpreted at a variety

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[40] For instance, with reference to Madagascar, Bloch (1989:79-80 observes that: "Ritual communication makes the social world appear organised in a fixed order which recurs without beginning and without end. As a result the social is like the natural, even a part of nature, and so ritual communications project the political, the social, the discontinuous, the cultural and the arbitrary into the image and the realm of repetitive natures" He also suggests that ritual is one of the major "apparatuses by which ideology is created in pre-industrial societies" (ibid.:122).

of levels ranging from the social and moral to the physiological "proclaiming their ultimate religious unity, over and above the conflicts between and wthin these orders" (Turner 1969:52). Specifically, in connection with brahmanical literature, it has been recognised that these texts served "to continue older values, to validate new values" (R.S.Sharma 1983b:67). It is also evident that, on a broader plane, they were conceived of as a means of constructing a system based on a "metaphysical-ethical rationalism" the aim of which was to "understand the world as a 'meaningful cosmos'...(and) to take a consistent and unified stance towards it" (Schlucter 1979:15, italics original). To deal adequately with the entire range of meanings embedded in such symbols is obviously beyond the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, we do hope to focus on certain important symbolic equations and connections which operate at a number of levels, and serve to unify the values communicated through a wide range of rituals.

The brahmanical texts, in fact, explicitly operate at a number of levels, each of which is, to a certain extent, idealised. The first level is that of the gods, and while it is recognised that divine and human institutions should ideally be identical, it is evident that there were discrepancies which were often resolved or concealed through elaborate linguistic exercises. This level and the problems posed by it are best exemplified by myths, which, once developed and embedded within the tradition, seem to have been difficult to eradicate. Hence, when such myths were no longer considered appropriate in a changed situation, they were often modified or reinterpreted with considerable dexterity.

Secondly, we have a somewhat intermediate ritual level, where gods and men are brought into contact with one another. This level was also subject to change. The very significance of a specific ritual varies over time, the deities associated with a particular sacrifice may change, and the ritual itself becomes more or less complex. Given the use of rituals as a means of social communication, such changes are obviously significant, indicating as they do, shifts in both the message and the medium.

The third level, which is discernible from incidental references, is a mundane human level. What is interesting is that while attempts are made to bring these strands into harmony with one another, there are divergences. Further, as noted above, changes are discernible within each level. In other words, the brahmanical tradition is one which evolves dynamically, and as such, is clearly relevant for any analysis of historical change.[41]

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[41] In many cases the authors themselves are aware of such changes. For instance, it is stated in the ADS (2.6.13.7,8) that dharmavyatikrama or deviation from dharma may be observed amongst one's ancestors, but such deviance did not amount to sin in their case as they possessed tejas (splendour, brilliance). This would imply changing norms or a sharper definition of norms and an awareness of changed circumstances. In other instances changes are implied. Thus in discussing the links between actual sacrifices and the prescriptions found in the Brāhmaṇas, Devasthali (1965:139) observes: "From...the discussion regarding differences of opinion and divergent practices as regards several sacrificial details we can clearly see that sacrifice...must have been developing from time to time..." Similarly, with reference to the Dharma Sūtras, Sengupta (1914:4) recognised that the sources of authority for dharma cited in various texts varied according to changing social ends and ideals.

It is likely that the changes discernible in the brahmanical tradition reflect a tendency inherent in the relationship between ideology and power, economic, social, or political, which

> is expressed not only in the manner in which elites or other special interest groups utilise religious ideology to establish, challenge, or change a specific social order, but also in the sense in which power establishes 'religious' personalities, authorizes specific religious practices and their insignia, defines what is to be believed, and in fact constructs religious ideology (Knapp 1988:172).

At another level, the changes within the tradition probably relate to the fundamental problem of defining meanings (Wolf 1982:388) and enforcing such definitions--a problem which confronts any ideological construction. The definition of meanings implies both laying down categories through which reality is to be perceived and denying the existence of alternatives (ibid.). Once defined, moreover, meanings need to be defended and preserved through constant reiteration or the "development of redundancy" (ibid.). As we shall see, within the brahmanical tradition, redundancy often manifests itself in the reiteration of certain basic ideals in a variety of forms through a wide range of ritual and non-ritual practices and prescriptions.

The possibilities of developing alternative categories nonetheless remained as a constant challenge, and is reflected in another tendency evident within the brahmanical tradition, viz., a widening and to a certain extent shifting of the definition of the sacred, accompanied by a consistent attempt to assert brahmanical control over such definitions. This led, for example, to the brahmanisation of a variety of rituals and to the incorporation of mystic insight within the definition of the sacred.

This extension, however, did not involve the simple incorporation of new rituals, or institutions such as asceticism, but was a more complex process in which such beliefs were adapted, modified, and assigned a specific place within the entire scheme of affairs. Thus, to a certain extent, the dynamism evident within the brahmanical tradition was the result of attempts to counter alternative traditions--either the practices of groups which were outside the sphere of influence of the brāhmanas, or of groups which were within this sphere but attempted, nonetheless, to break away from it.[42]

While the texts under consideration thus reflect important historical processes, they suffer from certain limitations as well. These stem primarily from their prescriptive nature which has led scholars to speculate on the extent to which the prescriptions were actually effective.[43] In a sense, the problem has two related dimensions--one pertaining to the actual performance of the rituals prescribed in the texts, and the second, more complex, related to determining the extent to which the rituals, if performed, were effective in communicating the values which were central to the brahmanical tradition.

To start with the question of performance--Buddhist literature provides us with a range of evidence suggesting familiarity with a variety of brahmanical rituals. These include major sacrifices

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[42] For example, while political leaders may find the formalisation inherent in the ritualisation of power advantageous, as it confers a certain invulnerability on their position, ritualisation, by formalising relations may, at the same time, restrict their freedom of manipulation (Bloch 1989:29). Hence, the use of rituals for political ends is marked by an element of tension.

[43] See for instance Drekmeier (1962:6) who notes, "We could wish to know more about their popular acceptance, but we cannot."

such as the assamedha (aśvamedha), purisamedha (puruṣamedha), samñāpāsa (?), and vāchapeya (Barua 1956:87-108). Rulers such as Pasenadi of Kosala are also reputed to have celebrated various mahāyañña (mahāyajña or great sacrifices).

Buddhist sources also refer to the four major categories of priests associated with the ritual, viz., the hotṛ, udgātṛ, adhvaryu, and brāhmaṇa. Further, the pañcabali (five offerings) of the Buddhists consisting of offerings to the ñāti (jñāti or kinsman), atithi (guest), pubbapeta (spirit of the ancestor), rājā, and devatā (divine being), are somewhat similar to the pañcamahāyajña (five great sacrifices) prescribed in the brahmanical tradition, consisting of offerings to the devas (gods), bhūtas (beings), pitṛs (male paternal ancestors), brahma (the priestly category), and manuṣyas (men). Besides, saṁskāras, rituals associated with rites of passage, continued to be performe even by lay Buddhists (Chakravarti 1987:63). Apart from such broad similarities, the Pali canon provides evidence for the prevalence of minor brahmanical rites (Wagle 1967-68:363-372). These include rites of purification, rites connected with death, ancestor and snake worship, and ritual suicide.[44]

If the performance of rituals is thus well-attested to, its impact remains to be assessed. Given the communicative nature of rituals, the impact would in all likelihood vary in accordance

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[44] Incidental references from other sources also corroborate the performance of rituals. For instance, the earliest phase of the Rāmāyaṇa contains references to sacrifices, to the sacrificial altar, and to specific rituals such as the agnihotra, aśvamedha, rājasūya, and vājapeya, to which are added, in the second phase, basic rituals such as the agniṣṭoma, āgrāyaṇa, and paurṇamāsī sacrifices (Brockington 1984:208). Early medieval inscriptions also refer to the performance of various sacrifices (Pathak 1960: 218-230).

with the social categories involved. Such involvement must be understood in terms of the inclusion or the explicit exclusion of specific categories, and secondly, in terms of the differential roles assigned to participants within the ritual. Obviously, the message communicated to each category would have been different.[45]

More important is the argument that rituals and the message communicated through them are by no means synonymous with the entire cognitive system of a particular society (Bloch 1989:viii). In fact, ritual cognition may provide an alternative to everyday cognition (ibid.). In other words, we need to bear in mind that there were other mechanisms of communication and perception as well, and that the values incorporated within the brahmanical tradition may not have been the only ones prevalent.[46] However, as noted earlier, the very changes within the brahmanical tradition suggest that attempts were constantly made to meet such possibilities and to construct, validate, and propagate changing perceptions of social reality and social ideals.

This is evident, for instance, in the discussion on varna, commonly regarded as one of the basic features of the brahmanical scheme.[47] It has been suggested that Pali texts do not support the view that the position of the brāhmana was one of privilege in the eyes of the law, some Jātaka stories referring specifically to the

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[45] For instance, "dominant class ideologies and ritual practices may neither be shared by the state's subjects nor even be 'understood' by them in any sense besides that of signifying power difference and making power differentiation meaningful" (Gledhill 1988:9).

[46] The most outstanding examples of such alternatives are evident from the more or less contemporary Buddhist and Jain traditions.

[47] For a detailed discussion on varna see Chapter VII.

execution of brāhmaṇas (Ganguly 1927:92). In general, Buddhist literature contains:

> numerous derogatory references to the brāhmaṇas, who are depicted in a variety of negative situations. Their vices include pride, deceit, avarice, and even crimes such as matricide and patricide, beside milder human failings such as gluttony (Chakravarti 1987:41).

Such characterisations would have presented a challenge to the claims of the brāhmaṇas to a unique status in society.

Buddhist evidence has also been used to argue that the varṇa hierarchy as a whole represented a theoretical construct with only limited validity in practice (e.g., Chakravarti 1987:104-108). What is more likely however is that while specific elements of the brahmanical construct of varṇa may not have been universally valid (as is in fact recognised by the provision for āpad-dharma to meet crises in the Dharma Sūtras and later literature), the broad framework had a wider relevance. This is reflected in the fact that very often, the ideological construct of different groups is presented in terms of a theme familiar to all, viz., varṇa. Besides, in some specific instances, such as that of the caṇḍālas, the descriptions available in Pali literature corroborate the low status assigned to them in prescriptive brahmanical literature (Jha 1975:21, 1986:29).

In our opinion, if one views the brahmanical tradition as dynamic rather than static, and as evolving within a context of socio-political transformation, it is possible to utilise it to arrive at an understanding of the changes which were taking place. These possibilities are in part related to the unique position of the brahmanical authors vis-a-vis those who exercised explicit political authority. As Janeway (1975:103) observes, there are two aspects of power, viz., power viewed from within, i.e., from

the perspective of the person wielding it, in which sense it may be viewed in positive terms as a desirable attribute, such as ability or skill, and power as experienced by others, from without, who may experience it negatively as domination. The brāhmanas were unique in the sense that they formed part of both spheres--they were closely associated with political power, but at the same time did not directly wield it. This dual perspective provides insights which are particularly valuable.

This is not to deny that this perspective enables us to view or understand the processes of political change primarily from the point of view of men of the dominant varnas. The ways in which such changes affected men of the lower varnas, such as the vaiśyas and śūdras, and women of all four varnas, and the possible reactions of such groups to these changes are only indirectly reflected in these texts. Information on śūdras is, in particular, rather sparse. Hence, while one can utilise the brahmanical tradition to arrive at an enriched historical understanding, it is evident that there are certain lacunae inherent in the tradition itself. However, an awareness of the existence of such lacunae permits a fruitful analysis of the tradition.

III

The word rājā occurs as early as the Rg Veda. However, it is generally recognised that the Vedic term rājā is by no means the equivalent of the modern 'king'. In fact, even when the term is translated as 'king' (e.g., VI:s.v.), it is admitted that "royal power was clearly insecure" and that the word often means no more than "a 'noble of the ruling house' or perhaps even merely a 'noble'" (ibid.).[48] Given such tenuous origins, the need to understand how the term rājā changes in significance and becomes synonymous with monarchy or kingship is obvious. At the same time, the process whereby the institution of rājya gained acceptance requires analysis.

The most distinctive feature of monarchy as a system of government is the concentration of all political power, theoretically at least, in the hands of a single person, almost invariably a man. Further, this man supposedly owes his position to his birth in a particular kin group and is ideally the eldest son of the previous ruler. To be regarded as legitimate, monarchy then implies a belief that the ruler and his ancestors are unique in relation to other members of society, and a belief that the

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[48] Likewise, Shama Sastry (1967:11) observes that the rājā in the Rg Vedic context was in all likelihood a chief or noble rather than a hereditary monarch. In the context of Buddhist literature, the term rājā is sometimes used in the sense of an elected monarch or nobleman, or a local chieftain or a prince. In the case of the Sākyans and the Koliyans, it was used in the sense of head of kulas, families or clans (PED:s.v.). Such a situation is by no means unique to India. In the early Greek context, for instance, the term basileus, used from the Mycenean period onwards, can be translated as king only in the Macedonian period (Runciman 1982: 358).

monarch's existence is vital for the proper functioning of society. Hence, we may expect that any attempt to justify or explain this system of government will on the one hand focus on the difference between the monarch and other members of society, and on the other, try to prove that the monarch is vitally connected to the rest of society. While this dual purpose remains common throughout the brahmanical tradition, the forms in which it is manifested tend to vary. To an extent, changes in the forms of legitimation may be related to an inherent contradiction in these underlying premises, seeking to emphasise uniqueness and connectedness respectively. This problem becomes more acute in a situation of growing socio-economic complexity, and partially in response to these, the ideals of rulership and the institutions associated with it change during the period under consideration.

In our opinion, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the process of the emergence of monarchy, we need to view it, first, in the context of the existence/emergence of other positions of status, instead of as a unilinear development. This has two dimensions. On the one hand the rājā probably consolidated power within the context of a social order where other sources of power or bases of leadership were available. Secondly, one can locate the emergence of rājya within the context of more or less independent communities which were gradually coming into or being brought into contact with one another.[49] In the process, attempts were made to

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[49] This is also evidenced by the archaeological data referred to earlier (Section I).

coalesce distinct and occasionally divergent institutions of rulership. This is reflected both in the existence of a number of terms indicative of leadership and rulership and in the tendency to associate virtually all these terms with a single varna category, viz., rājañya or ksatriya.

A number of terms are used to indicate positions of importance. Of these, two, the śrestha and the rājā, are particularly significant. Other terms, less commonly used, include the adhipati, virāj, and svarāj. While there is an obvious overlap in the significance of these terms, certain subtle differences emerge from a detailed consideration. Both the similarities and the differences are crucial in enabling us to arrive at an understanding of the processes leading to the emergence of monarchy. Further, each term incorporates different, sometimes conflicting ideals. These may represent the divergent interests of different social categories which were sought to be reconciled. Alternatively, they may reflect the specific ideals/norms associated with different, independent cultures which were gradually encompassed within a unified tradition.[50] These possibilities will be explored for the śrestha (Chapter II), the adhipati, virāj, and svarāj (Chapter III), and the rājā (Chapters IV-VI).[51]

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[50] For instance, śraiṣṭhya is associated with Indra and Prajāpati. This has interesting implications, given their divergent characteristics and changing importance during various phases of the brahmanical tradition, explored below (Chapter II).

[51] The chapterisation does not imply the chronological priority of the emergence of any particular institution. In fact, we will be examining broadly synchronous developments which have been distinguished for purposes of analysis.

For each of the terms under consideration, the data analysed pertain to the three levels discernible within the brahmanical tradition referred to earlier. However, as we shall see, the proportion of information available from different levels often varies substantially. This variation has two aspects--for any particular term, the information available from one level may be more or less than from another level, and there are significant variations amongst terms--for instance there are many more rituals pertaining to the legitimation of the rājā than for the adhipati. Such variations are significant in drawing attention to the relative importance and/or vulnerability of specific positions.

As noted earlier, the data available from the three levels are not necessarily homogenous. In fact, we have argued that the differences which are evident provide useful indices of socio-political change. We will examine the differences and the implications of these for each of the terms under consideration.

Within this framework we will focus on the spheres of operation and influence ascribed to each of these personnages. Very often, spheres are defined in terms of social categories, and, less commonly, in terms of a delimited territory. Besides, there is evidence to suggest a changing definition of such spheres.

In this context, we will examine certain specific aspects which were crucial in defining these positions. These include the links between the occupants of such positions and the economy. We will explore whether such men were considered responsible for general prosperity, the terms in which this prosperity was defined, and the means whereby it was to be ensured. It will be evident that the ability to establish claims to ensuring general prosperity

was closely linked to claiming a share of the resources of those who were supposed to benefit from the process. In other words, the notion of the beneficient chief or ruler was very often used to legitimise economic exactions.

At another level, we will investigate the extent to which the incumbents of such positions were characterised as wealthy, the constituents of such wealth, the means conceived for acquiring it, and the legitimate or other uses envisaged for such resources. As we shall see, the very processes whereby chiefs or rulers attempted to acquire resources and the uses envisaged for them often accelerated socio-economic differentiation.

Definitions of prosperity within the brahmanical tradition very often encompass procreation and fertility. Hence it is not surprising that attempts were made to associate leaders or rulers with procreative processes. More often than not, this was accompanied by a systematic effort to convert women in general and wives in particular into instruments of procreation. At the same time, procreation itself was envisaged as an increasingly complex activity. Both the process, and its social implications, will be discussed for each of the terms under consideration.

Another area of exploration relates to the role of holders of such positions vis-a-vis socio-political conflicts. Here we will focus on three issues which were evidently regarded as of crucial importance. These included the definition of varna, the definition of inter- and intra-generational ties amongst kinsmen, and the definition of gender stratification. What is significant is that not all chiefs or rulers were conceived of as playing a role vis-a-vis such issues. In fact, these issues were probably

irrelevant for the virāj and the early Vedic rājā, but were central to the definition of śraisthya, and acquired increasing importance for the later Vedic and post-Vedic rājā, adhipati, and svarāj. The invclvement with such issues meant, more often than not, supporting certain social categories against others.

While the ability to take on such roles was useful in generating social support, it also necessitated the creation of more complex mecahnisms for implementing them. Basic to the develcpment of these mechanisms was the ability to acquire, cn a more or less systematic basis, the resources necessary to maintain them. This in turn necessitated the forging of links both with personnel who could assist in the task of appropriation, and with the socio-economic categories from whom resources could be acquired. While this was attempted in the context of both śraisthya and rājya, the latter was, as we shall see, more successful, probably owing to the intrinsic sacrality asscciated with the institution. This in turn permitted the development of other supportive mechanisms of coercion and communication in connection with rājya, whereas such supportive mechanisms were relatively undeveloped for the other terms under consideration.

We will also focus on the means recognised for legitimately acquiring such positions. Given the importance of ritual legitimation referred to earlier, we will examine the extent to which access to such positions enabled incumbents to define the sacred. Here, once again, a variety of possibilities emerge, ranging from identity with the sacred, to notions of controlling it or of hostility or indifference to it. This will be followed by an

examination of the elements of sacrality selected as a means of legitimating political power, involving, in particular, an analysis of various sacrifices used for this purpose, ranging from the relatively simple soma sacrifice associated with the śreṣṭha, to complicated, composite rituals such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya associated with the rājā.[53]

A study of such sacrifices yields information at a number of levels. To start with, the deities with whom the sacrificer is identified in the course of the ritual provide information on the ideals associated with the acquisition of particular titles of status, as the attributes of these deities are often explicitly conferred on the sacrificer. At a more mundane level, the human participants involved in each ritual and the specific roles assigned to them enable us to understand the socio-political messages communicated through such sacrifices. For instance, most sacrifices include an element of gift exchange. We will examine both the content and the significance of such exchanges. In some cases, such as the soma sacrifice, there is evidence for the modification and extension of the ritual.[54] We will analyse such developments and explore their implications.

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[53] The importance of the sacrifice in legitimating the position of the rājā in particular has been widely recognised. Thus Ghoshal (1966b:25) observes: "The king...derives his authority, including his immunity from punishment, from the sacrifice through the intermediary of the gods or else directly from the sacrifice. Further,...he acquires his divinity (to the point of identity with the highest deity of the pantheon) by virtue of his participation in the same ceremony," while Smith (1958:4) goes to the extent of stating that in the later Vedic situation "kingship is also a ritual."

[54] This is discussed in the next chapter.

least two levels--one associated with major sacrifices such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya, which were explicitly status-conferring rituals, and another associated with domestic rituals, in the course of which the male head of the household was frequently equated with the rājā or, occasionally, the śreṣṭha. This tendency was particularly significant in the long run, because as major sacrifices declined in importance, domestic rituals played an increasingly important role in the process of legitimating the socio-political order.

Occasionally, the texts contain myths relating to the origins of positions of status. Wherever these are available, we will examine them and discuss their possible significance. We will also discuss the implications of the presence or absence of such myths pertaining to specific terms, as this in itself is an index of the extent to which the emergence of a particular institution was thought to require explanation or justification or alternatively, regarded as natural.

After discussing the features associated with positions of high status, we will focus on the broader social context within which these must be viewed, examining in particular the varṇa hierarchy (Chapter VII) and the kinship structure and household organisation (Chapter VIII). As will be evident, the context provided by the development of these institutions influenced, and was in turn influenced by the consolidation of rājya.

As in the case of positions of status, data pertaining to the varṇa hierarchy are available from all three levels of the brahmanical tradition. The information available enables us to discuss both the evolution of the varṇa hierarchy and the changes discernible within it.

We will examine the attempt to equate varna categories with systems of distribution and efforts to channelise resources through specific distributive networks, typified by ritual exchanges, tribute and trade. We will argue that the ability to divert more or less resources through one or the other channel provides an indication of the relative strength of different varna categories. At the same time, efforts to control the distribution of resources created tensions and provided an increasingly complex socio-political backdrop to the emergence of rājya.

Related to the above, we will focus on attempts to define access to positions of status in terms of varna, the challenges to this, and their resolution. Here it will be argued that while the brāhmanas posed a challenge on the basis of sacrality, this was a challenge within the framework of shared political interests. The challenge posed by the viś was, in a sense, more fundamental, as it was initially related to an alternative definition of power. However, it was marginalised, both through deliberate efforts and through the growing differentiation within the viś.

We will next explore the means whereby varna identities were consolidated or challenged, using the relationship between brāhmanas and the realm of the sacred as illustrative of the process and its problems. We will also examine attempts to legitimate the varna-based order, focusing in particular on the means of legitimation and the elements of the order which were legitimated through myths, rituals, and the envisaged enforcement of at least some varna-related norms by chiefs or rulers.

Finally we will focus on the evidence for changes within the kinship structure and household organisation. As noted earlier, it is evident that the emergence of exclusive political institutions

is very often accompanied by or related to far-reaching changes within kinship organisation. In this context, we will begin by examining the changes in the definition of kinsfolk, who may or may not have shared a common residence, as well as the characteristics associated with such residential units. Here there is evidence for a plurality of household forms giving way to what was envisaged as the ideal unit, the grha, associated with hierarchically ordered kinship ties between husband and wife and father and son. We will argue that this form of household organisation permitted the consolidation of both procreative and productive resources. While such a consolidation of power and resources was probably beneficial both from the point of view of the head of the household, the grhapati, and chiefs or rulers, who could negotiate with him, its maintenance required an elaborate process of socialisation, including rites of passage and a range of sacrifices, which we will examine. Besides, attempts to legitimise the new household order resulted in closer ties being forged between the grhapati on the one hand and the priest and the rājā in particular on the other. As we shall see, the establishment of such bonds was a two-way process, with both participants influencing one another. Thus, we will explore the content of political authority as well as its context, examining the way in which various hierarchies of power and authority conflict with and/or reinforce one another in the area and period under consideration.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ŚRAIṢṬHYA

> They, the organs, said to Prajāpati, the father, "Who, o Lord, is the śrestha amongst us?"
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> Chāndogya Upaniṣad.

I

The period during which the institution of rājya developed was characterised by the exploration of a variety of political possibilities. These dealt with questions which were assuming importance--over whom or what was power to be exercised? What were the essential attributes associated with powerful men? What were the roles envisaged for them in society? How were they expected to fulfil such roles? And how was the existence/emergence of these men to be explained or justified? Although certain broad, common concerns are evident in such discussions, the resolutions envisaged were often varied. Some of these were incorporated within the definition of rājya as it evolved, whereas others were gradually marginalised. Amongst the former, the attributes associated with śraiṣthya were particularly significant. As such, an analysis of these provides an insight into the changing nature of rājya.

The term śrestha was used in the brahmanical tradition to characterise either a god or a man who occupied the highest or

the best position in divine or human society.[1] This position was associated with attributes of leadership, many of which were later assimilated to those of the rājā. There is also evidence to suggest that the institution of śraiṣṭhya was evolving--this is apparent from attempts to connect śraiṣṭhya with deities such as Indra (e.g., PVB 7.8.2, AB 4.19.3, SB 1:6.3.22)[2] and Prajāpati (e.g., PVB 6.3.9, AB 4.19.3, SB 11.5.4.3), each fairly distinctive,[3] as well from variations in myths and rituals which legitimised the position of the śreṣṭha

The contrast between Indra and Prajāpati is apparent at a number of levels. For instance, while Indra was at the zenith of his importance in the early Vedic tradition, being praised in about 250 hymns in the Ṛg Veda (Griswold 1971:87), Prajāpati was just "appearing above the horizon" (ibid.:87). In fact, most of the references to Prajāpati as a distinctive deity occur in

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[1] Definitions of the term include notions of seniority and social status, such as that of a brāhmaṇa or king (PSED:s.v.), or those of excellence, primacy and chieftaincy (SED:s.v.). The Pali form of the word, seṭṭha, also means best or excellent (PED:s.v.). While the term śreṣṭha is occasionally used as an adjective for the rājā, the two terms are by no means synonymous.

[2] Occasionally, other titles are used for Indra. These include the term rājā (e.g., RV 2.14.11, SB 2.6.4.4), viśpati (e.g., RV 3.40.3), svarāj (RV 3.45.5, SSS 8.17.2), samrāj (e.g., RV 4.21.2), nṛpati (e.g., RV 4.20.1), virāj (e.g., SSS 8.17.2), and adhipati (e.g., ApSS 14.3.5). However, it should be noted that neither in the early nor in the later Vedic tradition was Indra the typical divine rājā, that position being commonly ascribed to either Varuṇa or Soma. The use of a wide range of titles for a single deity was probably a mechanism for coalescing divergent ideals, further examples of which will be discussed in Chapters III and IV.

[3] Other deities, less commonly associated with śraiṣṭhya include Agni (e.g., SB 8.3.1.3), conceived of as sharing śraiṣṭhya with Indra, and Viṣṇu or Āditya (ibid.:14.1.1.5).

the tenth mandala of the text, which is commonly regarded as late (Deshmukh 1933:304, Joshi 1973:101).[4] This would suggest that Prajāpati was in all likelihood a non-Vedic deity, a possibility which is strengthened by the fact that he was not Indo-Iranian (Staal 1978:340), and, unlike most deities, his name was in reality a functional description (ibid.:341), implying lordship over all beings.

Apart from the possibility of distinct origins, the attributes of Indra and Prajāpati are markedly different, the former being associated with valour, while the latter was considered responsible for the process of creation and regeneration. The contrast between the two was expressed rather succinctly in the means of acquiring the status of Viśvakarman (literally all-creator) attributed to them--Indra was thought to have attained the position by killing Vṛtra, while Prajāpati was conceived of as achieving it by creating prajā or offspring (AB 4.18.8).[5]

The association of śraiṣṭhya with such unique deities opened up a number of often divergent possibilities for those who aspired to a similar position on the human plane. At the same time, if Prajāpati and Indra were initially worshipped by distinct groups of people, the suggested identification between the deities through the common attribute of śraiṣṭhya would have made possible an amalgamation of such groups and may in fact reflect this process.

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[4]The relatively late emergence of Prajāpati as an important deity created considerable problems for the ritualists who had to explain the paucity of mantras associated with the deity. A myth was propagated according to which Prajāpati incurred the wrath of Speech by proclaiming her to be inferior to Mind, hence she refused to carry oblations to him (SB 1.4.5.8-12). This served to "explain" the lack of references to Prajāpati in earlier literature.

[5]Scholars like Renou (1953:22) justifiably regard Indra as a god who "retains the appearance and characteristics of a hero" while Prajāpati is by comparison "a colourless figure, devoid of legend. His creative or procreative functions drain him of power" (ibid.:24).

Probably related to this was a certain shift in the emphasis on Indra's characteristic attributes. For instance, the notion of the god as an enemy of the dāsas or dasyus, fairly common in the early Vedic tradition, is virtually absent in the later Vedic phase. Other attributes, such as his hostility towards Vṛtra, acquire new dimensions,[6] whereas certain features, such as his association with material prosperity, persist. It will be evident that the shifting emphasis on certain attributes, and the continued insistence on others were connected with crucial socio-political issues and reflect attempts to resolve or contain the tensions inherent in them.

At another level, the rituals associated with the legitimate acquisition of śraiṣṭhya, which included the basic soma sacrifice and its variants,[7] and the sautrāmaṇī, provide a certain perspective on the qualities required of the ideal śreṣṭha on the human plane. While some of these coincide with the attributes associated with the deities referred to above, there are certain differences as well. Besides, there is evidence which indicates that the very control of the soma sacrifice was disputed. The Brāhmaṇas, in particular, discuss at length the relative merits and demerits of alternative procedures and aims. This would, once again, suggest a rather fluid situation.

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[6] This is discussed in Section VII.

[7] For details see Section X.

The data available from myths and rituals pertaining to śraiṣṭhya are supplemented by incidental references to human śreṣṭhas and their characteristic attributes and behaviour. However, on the human plane, although the goal of śraiṣṭhya was recognised as a legitimate one for the yajamāna or male sacrificer, references to specific śreṣṭhas are virtually absent.[8] This probably indicates that while the importance of śraiṣṭhya was not denied within the brahmanical tradition, deliberate attempts were not made to preserve the names of those who occupied such positions,[9] pointing to a certain degree of ambiguity and tension vis-a-vis this institution. The bases of such tensions, which we will explore, provide an understanding of some of the socio-political processes associated with the emergence of rājya.

The discussion on śraiṣṭhya will focus, to start with, on the categories in terms of which its operation was envisaged (Section II). Here, there is evidence for divergent definitions, which probably reflect an attempt to synthesise distinct institutions associated with specific norms. We will next explore the links postulated between the śreṣṭha and material resources, examining the extent to which divine and human śreṣṭhas were conceived of a responsible for general well-being (Section III), as well as the specfic resources to which access was claimed, the means whereby these were acquired, and the uses envisaged for

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[8] Amongst the few legendary men referred to as a śreṣṭha is Śunaḥśepa, who was appointed as a jyeṣṭha and śreṣṭha by Viśvāmitra (e.g., SSS 15.25.1). A less clear-cut example occurs in a prayer offered to ensure that a man named Prātardani would become a śreṣṭha in killing Vṛtras (RV 6.26.8).

[9] As opposed to this, the brahmanical tradition incorporated stereotyped lists of rājās. For details, see Chapter IV.

them, focusing in particular on their implications (Sections IV and V). This will be followed by an examination of the socio-political role of the śrestha vis-a-vis varna (Section VI), relations amongst kinsmen (Section VII), and gender stratification (Section VIII). We will also explore the means whereby the śrestha was expected to perform his role, with special reference to his access to resources, and his ability (or lack of ability) to convert these into mechanisms of coercion and communication (Section IX). Finally, we will analyse the processes whereby śraisthya was legitimated and discuss their significance (Section X).

II

The notion of the śreṣṭha as the best or chief was frequently defined, on both the divine and the human plane, in terms of categories stressing the relationship or identity between the śreṣṭha and those over whom he exercised control. This is evident in the case of Indra, a deva or god, who was often regarded as a śreṣṭha amongst other devas (e.g., SB 1.6.3.22).[10] Moreover, he was also characterised as striving to attain or assert his śraiṣṭhya over them (e.g., BSS 18.31). Clearly, the position of the śreṣṭha, thus defined, would have been one of the first amongst equals, with all the tensions inherent in achieving and maintaining such a position.

If Indra's śraiṣṭhya was defined in finite terms, that of Prajāpati was, potentially at least, far more comprehensive. This is apparent from the identification of Prajāpati with the saṁvatsara or the year (e.g., PVB 16.4.13, AB 1.1.1, BAU 1.5.14 etc.), which in turn was identified with sarva or all (e.g., SB 12.8.2.36)[11] probably owing to the fact that the year was associated with the life cycles of both the plant and animal worlds and hence with the bases of human existence (Gonda 1984:7-9).[12] Besides,

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[10] Similarly, Āditya or the sun is described as raśmīnāṁ śreṣṭha (ApSS 12.21.2), i.e., the best or chief of rays.

[11] In the course of the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.8.3.22) Indra was also conceived of as established in totality or sarva.

[12] This was based on the homology of the universe conceived from the temporal point of view to the universe as such, the totality of all existence (Gonda 1984:62). The identification of Prajāpati with the totality of human experience had other implications as well. According to Banerjee (1981:18): "He is in fact an attempt to conceive the abstract notion of the first cause of the universe...The infinite nature of Prajāpati obtained its final development as the ultimate reality in later philosophy."

> Prajāpati is something more, or rather, something less: the name is extended to include the anirukta, the symbol of the non-defined, the non-determined...He represents all that is undefined, whatever in the divine sphere is left unexpressed by the series of recognised divinities (Renou 1953:24).[13]

The definition of śraiṣṭhya on the human plane corresponded closely with that of Indra's. In fact, explicit equations between the two were fairly common. For instance, the udbhit, a variation of the soma sacrifice, was described as the means whereby Indra acquired śraiṣṭhya over the devas and was recommended for a man desirous of a similar status amongst his equals (BSS 18.31). More often than not, the śreṣṭha was defined in terms of his samānas or equals (e.g., PVB 6.3.10, BSS 18.31) and svā, literally one's own people (e.g., SB 12.8.2.28, BAU 1.3.18, ASS 10.3.22, SSS 10.16.8).[14]

Occasionally, the definition of śraiṣṭhya was widened. For instance, the śreṣṭha was defined in terms of manuṣyas or men in general (SSS 4.5.1). Besides, the possibility of attaining śraiṣṭhya over the janatā, a term which could both mean a specific community as well as (hu)mankind (SED:s.v.), was discussed (ApSS 5.24.4).

The definition of śraiṣṭhya associated with Indra and commonly adopted on the human plane was thus a fairly limited one, emphasising the bonds between the śreṣṭha and those over whom he asserted control. While this emphasis was probably useful in ensuring support, it could, at the same time, be used to challenge

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[13] Agrawala (1962:2) also points out that everything that is undefined belongs to Prajāpati.

[14] Such definitions persist even in the later brahmanical tradition. For instance, the relatively late SGS (1.19.6) contains a prayer to ensure that the new born son would be śreṣṭhatama amongst svā. In one instance (SB 1.4.5.5) the śreṣṭha was defined as the śiras (head) of the ardha or community (Eggeling 1963a:129). Elsewhere (AV 1.9.3) a prayer was offered to ensure śraiṣṭhya amongst sajātas (literally those sharing a common birth or origin).

the position of the śreṣṭha.[15] Moreover, it rendered his position vulnerable in a situation of social differentiation, where the support group of kinsfolk itself was becoming fragmented.[16]

In such a situation, the vaguer definition associated with Prajāpati may have been valuable. While there does not seem to have been any explicit attempt to extend this to the institution on the human plane, it is possible that this element was useful in widening the definition and scope of śraiṣṭhya, at least implicitly.[17]

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[15] This is a possibility which is discussed in the course of rituals such as the soma sacrifice.

[16] While changes in the kinship structure will be discussed in detail in Chapter VIII, developments which were most closely connected with the śreṣṭha are delineated in Sections VII and VIII below.

[17] This is suggested, for instance, by the analogical discussion (CU 5.1.7) where prāṇa or the breath is equated with the śreṣṭha as the entire body is affected by its departure, indicating that existence itself depends on the presence of the śreṣṭha.

III

The position of the śreṣṭha, whether viewed in terms of more or less related people or a vaguely defined totality, was associated with a number of distinctive attributes. Here we will focus on the links between the śreṣṭha and the material bases of society. We will explore the extent to which divine or human śreṣṭhas were associated with the creation of material resources, and the means associated with the process. As we shall see, the specific links developed between śraiṣṭhya and the processes which were thought to ensure general well-being, had important socio-economic implications.

Much of the discussion on the basis and means of ensuring general well-being was embedded in cosmogonic speculation. Both the typical divine śreṣṭhas, Indra and Prajāpati, were associated with cosmogonies. However, in keeping with their divergent characteristics, Indra's association with creation myths was much closer in the early Vedic tradition, whereas in the later Vedic tradition, Prajāpati emerged as virtually the sole creator god.[18] Moreover, references to Indra's role as creator are incidental, whereas, in the case of Prajāpati, we have evidence for a more systematically developed mythology.

In the early Vedic tradition, Indra was associated with establishing the heaven and earth and the intermediate space (RV 3.30.9) and with setting the sun on its proper course (ibid.: 3.30.12). Besides, he was conceived of as producing fire (ibid.: 2.12.3), creating the Dawn (ibid.:2.12.7), and releasing the

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[18] In fact, as is widely recognised, "In the period of the Brāhmaṇas the god Prajāpati occupies without doubt or question the position of the creator god, the supreme god of the world" Keith 1925:442).

rivers (ibid.:4.19.5). The means adopted by Indra for attaining these objectives are rarely discussed, although implicitly, some of these acts, such as releasing the rivers, were attributed to his valour. However, these achievements are almost never reiterated in later literature.[19]

Prajāpati, on the other hand, emerged as a creator god in the latest section of the Rg Veda (10.121.10), where he was implicitly identified with Hiraṇyagarbha, literally the golden embryo from which creation was thought to commence. In the later Vedic tradition, virtually all aspects of the known world were envisaged as emerging from him. These included the three worlds, the five seasons, the devas and asuras, the day and night, and the year (SB 11.1.6.22), which, as we have seen, was regarded as synonymous with the totality of human existence.[20] In short, the origin of virtually every conceivable entity was ascribed to the deity. Thus his association with creation was much more comprehensive than Indra's.

Unlike Indra's case, moreover, the means adopted by Prajapati for creation were discussed at length. One of the commonest methods associated with the process was tapas or austerity, the

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[19] As Rau (1973:200) observes: "Excepting the fact that Indra is credited with the creation of the clouds and the fixing of the earth or once identified with the sun, we do not find him concerned with any cosmic function, least of all with releasing waters."

[20] Elsewhere (SB 11.5.8.3) the creation of the three Vedas, basic to the ritual, was ascribed to him. In other cases (e.g., SB 6.1.1.8-15), the list of Prajāpati's creation was elaborated to include brahman, the waters, Agni, the horse, ass, goat, earth, clay, mud, saline soil, sand, gravel, rocks, ore, gold, plants, trees, Vāyu, the intermediate region, the sun, sky, moon, stars, the directions, the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, and twelve Ādityas, the Viśvedevas, and plants and creatures, both mortal and immortal.

standard formula being that Prajāpati, being alone, desired to reproduce (e.g., SB 6.1.1.8),[21] practising austerities to achieve his ends (e.g., AB 2.10.1, SB 11.5.8.1, CU 2.23.3, BSS 14.1 etc.).[22]

Another device frequently associated with Prajāpati's creative activities was the sacrifice, often "perceived" as a result of austerities. In this case, creation was visualised as a process of continuous regeneration, with Prajāpati losing his creative force, which was restored through the performance of specific rituals, ascribed initially to the deity and later transferred to the human plane, suggesting an equation between the yajamāna and Prajāpati.

The association of creation with the sacrifice had certain important implications. On the one hand it envisaged a role for human protagonists in creating or restoring the cosmic order. At the same time, the fact that this function was associated with ritual activities suggests that certain specific humans--viz., those who were qualified to perform the sacrifice or get it performed, probably exploited this notion to assert their claims to a unique status.

This possibility is reinforced when one considers the specific sacrifices associated with creation. These include

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[21] Saḥ ayaṁ puruṣaḥ Prajāpatiḥ akāmayata. Bhūyānt-syām prajāyeya iti. Saḥ aśrāmyat, saḥ tapaḥ atapyata.

[22] The notion of tapas as a generative mechanism also occurs in the last maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda (10.190.1,2), where tapas produces both ṛta and satya, the sea, night and day, the sea then producing the saṁvatsara. Other means of creation associated with Prajāpati include the use of the mystic syllables bhuḥ, bhuvar, and svar (e.g., SB 11.1.6.3), and the viṣṇukrama or the three strides of Viṣṇu (ibid.:6.7.2.12). Occasionally, Prajāpati is thought to have taken the form of a horse for this purpose (e.g., PVB 11.3.5).

those used to legitimise śraiṣṭhya such as the agniṣṭoma (PVB 6.1.1), atirātra (ibid.:4.1.4), dvādaśāha (AB 4.19.1) and gārga-trirātra (PVB 20.16.1).[23] Thus, in the very process of acquiring his position, the śreṣṭha was associated with setting in motion the fructifying forces of nature.[24]

What is also significant is that certain other mythological possibilities were, at the same time, explicitly or implicitly abandoned or modified. These included the notion of creation starting from a heterosexual pair. Some myths associated with Prajāpati evidently contained such a possibility, reflected in the notion of his incest with his daughter (RV 5.42.13, 1.71.5, 10.61.5-7). Nevertheless, the procreative potential of this relationship was not developed, although it was recognised as an indirect means of creation, supposedly resulting in the production of paśu (PVB 8.2.10) and mānuṣa or men (AB 3.13.9).[25]

Other possibilities which were ignored included analogies with productive processes. Analogies with the activities of craftsmen, for example, occasionally provided the underpinnings for mythological speculation in the Ṛg Veda (4.56.3, 10.72.2).

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[23]Variations in the soma sacrifice such as the jyotiṣṭoma and goṣṭoma (PVB 4.1.7) and the saḍaha (ibid.:4.1.9) were also considered to be creative or regenerative. Other sacrifices with a similar association included the rājasūya (SB 5.3.3.15), agnyādheya (ibid.:2.1.2.6), and the agnihotra (SSS 10.14.8).

[24]This was also reiterated by the ritual slaughter of Soma-Vṛtra in the course of the basic agniṣṭoma sacrifice. Soma was the embodiment of "all the nourishing and fertilizing principles in nature which were concentrated, created and distributed anew by the sacrifice" (Hubert and Mauss 1964:92).

[25]In this context we are informed that both animals and men were created from the retas or sperm of Prajāpati, who was, at the same time, condemned for attempted incest. The condemnation of incest is in itself a development of the later Vedic tradition, as, in the early Vedic tradition, a variety of incestuous relationships amongst deities are mentioned without exciting comment. For details, see Chapter VIII.

With the increasing importance of settled agriculture, moreover, the process of growing crops could have enriched such speculation. That such possibilities remained, nonetheless, unrealised, points to an attempt to deny the importance of physical processes of reproduction and production, while asserting control over their very preconditions or bases by fostering a specific understanding of creation.[26] In effect then, the emphasis on defining sacrifices as creative acts provided the basis for distinguishing amongst people, with those who could perform such acts implicitly and occasionally explicitly claiming superiority vis-a-vis those who could not do so. At the same time, efforts were made to convert this superiority into an actual control over material resources. Thus, the links envisaged between the divine and human śresthas and the cosmic order, concretised through rituals, was extended to a range of economic and social relationships, and both sharpened and justified growing socio-economic differentiation.

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[26] It is also likely that the creative activities attributed to Indra were marginalised owing to their association with physical prowess.

Speculation related to the creation of tangible and intangibles thus hinged on the establishment of a near-identity between Prajāpati and the human śreṣṭha, both of whom were associated with the very conditions of human existence. However, when we turn to the issue of actual control over the resources allegedly created, the situation becomes slightly more complex.

Of the two divine śreṣṭhas, Indra was frequently characterised as wealthy (e.g., vasupati or lord of wealth, RV 3.30.19). Occasionally, the specific elements of his wealth were enumerated. These included cattle, whence his characterisation as gopati (e.g., RV 3.30.21), which is one of the most common epithets used for the deity in the Rg Veda (Dange 1971:172). Elsewhere (RV 2.21.1), he is described as viśvajit, dhanajit, svaḥjit, sattrājit, nṛjit, urvarājit, aśvajit, gojit, and āpjit, literally the winner of all, wealth, light, always victorious, and the winner of men, fertile land, horses, cattle, and waters.[27]

If Indra was characterised as controlling wealth, Prajāpati was, on the other hand, totally identified with items of wealth, including all animals (SB 10.2.1.1), specifically enumerated as the man, horse, cow, sheep, and goat.

On the human plane, control over material resources was regarded as one of the crucial criteria for acquiring śraiṣṭhya. This is evident from the definition of the śreṣṭha as he who

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[27] In some later instances, Indra's association with wealth is less direct. For example, Sītā (the deified furrow symbolic of plough agriculture) is characterised as Indra's wife (PGS 2.17.9) and is described as the abode of the Vedas and all worldly works, as well as the possessor of horses, cattle, and delights, as the supporter of breaths, as wreathed in the threshing floor, and fertile.

obtains the most of the earth (SB 11.1.6.23).[28] This was clearly closer to the ideals associated with Indra than to those associated with Prajāpati.

On the ritual plane, moreover, the sacrifices meant to legitimise the acquisition of śraiṣṭhya were at the same time conceived of as a means of acquiring control over productive resources or produce. These were, more often than not, identified in terms of paśu, animals or cattle, and annādya, literally the ability to eat (e.g., AB 1.1.5), which were supposedly acquired through the soma sacrifice.[29] Other rites legitimising śraiṣṭhya such as the sautrāmaṇī were also prescribed for the annādyakāma, prajākāma, and paśukāma (ApSS 19.4.12), while the dvādaśāha (BSS 16.4) and the udbhit (ibid.:18.31) were recommended for the paśukāma.

In each of these cases, it was the individual sacrificer who was expected to benefit through the performance of the ritual. The use of the sacrifice for "acquiring" material benefits has often been viewed as a form of primitive magic to ensure production devised in situations where control over the environment is limited. It is also likely that those who performed such sacrifices

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[28] Yaḥ asyai bhūyiṣṭham vindate, saḥ eva śreṣṭhaḥ bhavati.

[29] These ends were frequently reiterated in the Śrauta Sūtras. For instance, the performance of the soma sacrifice was recommended for the paśukāma, i.e., the man desirous of acquiring cattle (SSS 8.8.11) and for those desirous of obtaining prajā and anna (ibid.: 4.13.1). The sacrifice was also thought to ensure the attainment of cattle, sheep, goats, and the essence of food (LSS 3.3.1), a prayer being offered to ensure the birth of cattle, horses, and men (ibid.:3.3.2), whereas elsewhere (ibid.:1.10.11-12) it was regarded as a means of establishing the rājañya in annādya.

sought, at the same time, to justify their claims to productive resources and produce by suggesting that these were their rewards for the performance of the ritual.[30]

Such assertions were, nonetheless, limited, as we have seen, to the acquisition of animal wealth and food. References to the major productive resource, land, are conspicuous by their absence. However, occasionally, attempts were made to widen the scope of the basic soma sacrifice. In one instance (SB 3.9.1.13), Prajāpati was supposed to have appropriated everything by means of an offering to the Viśvedevas in this context, whereas in another instance (ibid.:3.9.1.17), an offering to the Maruts, explicitly regarded as representatives of the viś, by Prajāpati, is described as a means of acquiring bhūmān or plenitude. This probably indicates an attempt to widen the economic bases of śraiṣṭhya on the human plane to include a claim to all the productive resources available. Ascribing this claim to Prajāpati is explicable in view of his vague, universalistic, features. At the same time, his association with the appropriation of wealth is clearly uncharacteristic, contrasting sharply with his usual identification with the totality of human existence.

The association of Prajāpati with the Maruts and the Viśvedevas in this context is also significant. Both the Maruts (e.g., PVB 18.1.14, AB 1.2.3) and the Viśvedevas (SB 10.4.1.9) were regarded as the counterpart of the viś amongst deities. There was thus an implicit recognition of the control over productive resources exercised by the viś which was sought to be appropriated

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[30] Other means of acquiring resources, including tribute, are discussed in Section IX.

by or for the śreṣṭha. At the same time, the fact that the divine viś had to be propitiated with an offering indicates the strength of their position, and possibly that of their human counterparts. Seizing the wealth of the viś was clearly not a viable proposition.

It is evident that there was a certain contrast between the kind of control over resources envisaged for the human śreṣṭhas and that associated with Indra and Prajāpati. As we have seen, men who aspired to śraiṣṭhya commonly asserted claims to certain material resources as part of the process of acquiring the position. However, these were normally limited to animals and food or the ability to eat. As opposed to this, Indra's claims to such resources were much wider, whereas Prajāpati was virtually identified with them. This dichotomy was probably related to the limits within which men functioned--even those who aspired to be the best or chief could claim only a few resources. At the same time, the broad range of resources associated with the deities suggested the potential which was open to their human counterparts, even if its realisation was well-nigh impossible.

As noted earlier, procreation was often recognised as an important aspect of material well-being within the brahmanical tradition.[31] Here again, while both Prajāpati and Indra were associated with obtaining offspring or prajā, their links with procreation were fairly distinct. Basically, while virtually all created beings were regarded, by definition, as Prajāpati's

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[31] Very often, the sacrificer is described as being both prajākāma (desirous of offspring) and paśukāma (desirous of cattle) performing a single ritual (e.g., the soma sacrifice, SSS 8.8.11) to attain both ends.

offspring, there are virtually no references to Indra's progeny in myths. Nevertheless, prayers to Indra were consistently recommended as a means of obtaining offspring almost throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g, RV 6.18.6, BSS 13.2, ApSS 3.15.8, PGS 1.9.5. etc.).[32]

Indra's association with the reproductive process was probably linked to his overt masculinity and his characterisation as the most masculine of men (nṛnām nṛtamaḥ, RV 6.33.3). It is also likely that the bull-like attributes of Indra were linked to notions of virility (Dandekar 1951:43).[33] Indra's very brith, moreover, was conceived of as an unusual process (RV 4.18.1-2), as he was thought to emerge, on his own initiative, from the side of his mother, symbolic of an assertion of masculine control over the process. This act, moreover, was explicitly linked to defiance towards and the destruction of his mother.

Given these associations, the invocation of Indra in prayers for progeny meant, in effect, an assertion of the importance of masculinity in procreation. While such an assertion denied the importance of female procreative powers, it nonetheless recognised the importance of the physical process itself, as control was

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[32]Further, a reference to Indra on the second day of the pṛṣṭha ṣaḍaha (a six-day soma sacrifice) was thought to ensure that an anurūpa putra (similar son) would be born to the sacrificer (PVB 11.6.3-5). Indra was also invoked to grant ten sons to the bride in the course of the marriage hymn (RV 10.85.45).

[33]The epithets vṛṣa and vṛṣabha are amongst those which occur over a hundred times in the Ṛg Veda in connection with Indra (Choudhuri 1981:4). "That the god of generative, creative, inaugurative, victorious, vital power and impetuousness in nature and the universe is associated with this energetic, vital, sexually potent and impetuous animal is far from surprising" (Gonda 1965: 77). Dandekar (1951:43) supports the standard derivation of Indra from indu or drop, arguing that the drops refer to the semen virile.

envisaged in terms of a dominant masculinity rather than as a negation of physicality per se.

Prajāpati's intervention, on the other hand, was conceived in terms of removing procreation from the realm of the physical, as he was thought to have obtained prajā by performing sacrifices or through austerities as mentioned above. The fact that the reification of the process was associated with a male god meant a complete negation of the role of the female in procreation. This notion was reiterated through prayers or offerings to Prajāpati, which were frequently recommended as a means of acquiring prajā (e.g., ASS 10.3.6, SSS 2.10.1, AGS 1.13.7).[34]

On the human plane, the rituals associated with śraiṣṭhya were very often conceived of as a means of acquiring prajā. This was especially true of the soma sacrifice (e.g., PVB 8.7.8-14, AB 3.13.13, SB 3.8.2.5, ASS 6.12.4, SSS 4.13.1, ApSS 10.4.3), in the course of which prayers were occasionally offered to obtain male offspring in particular (e.g., AB 3.13.13, SSS 5.9.19, ApSS 12.22.8, LSS 3.3.2).[35] The dvādaśāha was also recommended for obtaining prajā (PVB 11.3.5, AB 4.19.1, ASS 10.5.12) and suvīras (SB 4.5.6.4)[36] as was the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.8.2.6, BSS 17.43).

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[34]Alternatively, rites such as the vaiśvadeva (SSS 14.60.1) and the agnihotra (ibid.:10.14.8) by means of which Prajāpati was supposed to have obtained prajā were recommended for the sacrificer who desired prajā or offspring.

[35]Variations of the soma sacrifice such as the ekāhas (ASS 10.1.2,7), ahīnas (ibid.:10.2.25), the atirātra (PVB 20.4.8, ApSS 14.1.2), the prājāpatya (PVB22.5.4, ASS 10.3.6) and various sattras (ASS 12.5.6) were also recommended for the prajākāma. In one instance (SSS 10.15.8), knowledge of how Prajāpati produced Indra the vīra is recommended as a means of obtaining a vīra or valorous son.

[36]This sacrifice was regarded as the means whereby Prajāpati obtained all desires from all the worlds (PVB 21.2.5).

If the use of the sacrifice to obtain prajā rested on an explicit or implicit analogy between Prajāpati and the sacrificer, the specific sacrificial devices employed mimed heterosexual intercourse. This operated at a number of levels. At one level the wives of the devas (devapatnīs) were invited to the soma sacrifice, at which the presence of the sacrificer's wife was also required. These women, divine and human, were thought to ensure procreation by their very presence (PVB 8.7.8-14, AB 3.13.1, SB 3.8.2.5). At another level, heterosexual pairs or mithunas were created and employed in the course of the ritual. These could include pairs consisting of inanimate objects, of metres or verses and chants, which were employed in the course of the soma sacrifice (AB 1.1.1), the dvādaśāha (PVB 11.5.16,17, AB 5.24.4), and the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.8.2.6). Besides, in the course of the soma sacrifice, the sacrificer's wife was utilised in suggestive actions meant to ensure procreation (ApSS 13.15.9, LSS 2.10.16).[37]

The position of the human śreṣṭha vis-a-vis prajā was thus in many ways distinct from that of both Indra and Prajāpati. Unlike Indra and like Prajāpati, he was prajākāma or desirous of offspring. At the same time, he differed from Prajāpati in not being able to claim all prajā as his own. Besides, the use of biological symbolism, though ritualised, suggested a recognition of the importance of the physical process of procreation, which was, as we have seen, very often denied on the mythical plane. However, the very fact that procreation was sought to be ritualise and the context of such ritualisation, controlled as it was by th

[37] In this context water was to be poured on her thigh durin the tṛtīya savana or the third pressing of soma in order to ensure procreation.

male priests and the yajamāna indicates that an attempt was made to structure the relationship between procreative partners on unequal terms.[38] Clearly, the male was thought to control and benefit from the process, with the female being reduced to an essential instrument. Thus the assertion of control over the process of procreation and its outcome was greater than that envisaged for other productive processes.

It is evident that a variety of possibilities of control over productive and procreative resources were explored through myths and rituals relating to the divine and human śreṣṭhas. On the mythical plane, these ranged from assertions of control over the most important resources to identity with them. On the human plane, the possibilities envisaged through rituals were more finite, and it is likely that the soma sacrifice and its variants were used as mechanisms for legitimising the claims of individual men to resources. Besides, the sacrifice provided the context for ritualising procreation, which envisaged the reduction of women into instruments of procreation. Thus śraiṣṭhya rested on the recognition of the claims of individual men to productive resources and produce, typified by paśu and anna, and on the assertion of control over the procreative powers of women by men. It was also related to specific forms of distributing these resources, which we will explore in the next section.

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[38] Other elements of gender relations associated with śraiṣṭhya will be discussed in Section VIII.

The control which the śreṣṭha exercised over productive resources did not imply an ability to dispose of them arbitrarily. On the other hand, implicit or explicit norms governed the use of such resources. The divine śreṣṭha Indra, for instance, was clearly thought to be under an obligation to be generous. This is suggested by the fact that the epithet maghavan (e.g., RV 6.23.1), indicative of generosity and benevolence (Gonda 1959:42) is amongst those most frequently associated with Indra in the Rg Veda.[39] The term magha itself implied connections between the donor and the donee "obviously expressing the sense of property, wealth, possessions, viewed from the angle of a donor or recipient" (Gonda 1959:50).

Occasionally, a specific connection was established between the wealth Indra obtained and that which he was expected to distribute. Thus, seers were thought to pray to Indra (RV 3.55.22) as his sakhās or friends, hoping to obtain a share of the plants and waters produced for him by the earth.

As suggested by this prayer, an element of conditionality was associated with Indra's generosity. More explicitly, those who offered him soma could expect to obtain whatever they desired (RV 2.14.8).[40] This notion persists throughout the development of the sacrificial tradition. For instance, in the context of the

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[39] According to Griswold (1971:207) this epithet is his most common one apart from vṛtrahan, being used over a hundred times in the Rg Veda (Choudhuri 1981:4). This was one attribute which was occasionally extended to other deities such as Agni (RV 1.127.11) and Bṛhaspati (ibid.:2.24.12) in an attempt to evolve a composite ideal.

[40] Similarly, Indra was expected to ensure the prosperity of the yajamāna who offered sacrifices and made gifts (RV 1.83.3).

gavām ayana (PVB 4.7.8), Indra was expected to confer samṛddhi (prosperity) and paśu if invoked through certain specific pragāthas or couplets. He was also propitiated in order to obtain paśu in the course of the sākamprasthāyin (BSS 17.48), sākamedha (SSS 8.19.5), and the darśapūrṇamāsa (ApSS 3.15.8).[41]

Prajāpati, while not explicitly generous, was associated with providing the specific forms of subsistence to the four categories of beings, the devas, pitṛs, manuṣyas, and paśus (gods, patrilineal ancestors, men and animals respectively, SB 2.4.2.1-5). Unlike Indra, Prajāpati's assistance was not regarded as conditional on his worship.[42] In a sense, his position was envisaged as one "above" such connections (examples of this feature in other contexts are discussed below). Besides, the fact that he was associated with providing sustenance to diverse categories of beings suggests a much wider role than Indra's limited one vis-a-vis his invokers.

On the human plane, the rituals used for legitimating śraiṣṭhya were often conceived of as a means of promoting general well-being. For instance, different forms of the word Indra could be used on different days of the dvādaśāha to ensure that plants ripened during different seasons (PVB 10.8.1). Besides, as noted earlier,

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[41] Prayers were offered to him to ensure the protection of cattle as well (e.g., SSS 12.15.4).

[42] On the other hand Aguilar (1976:94) argues for a certain identity between the roles of Indra and Prajāpati. He suggests that: "Just as the example of Indra established the pattern to be followed in the case of the distribution of the booty after the battles, in the same way the example of Puruṣa/Prajāpati gave the norm to be followed by any sacrificer who sincerely aspired to the attainment of immortality." Nevertheless, apart from the basic similarity in being conceived of as providers, the position of Indra and Prajāpati is fairly well-differentiated.

the basic soma sacrifice was conceived of as a means of releasing the fructifying forces of nature. The association of the śrestha with such rituals implied an ability to ensure the prosperity of those who accepted his position.

Such rituals were also occasions on which the śrestha was expected to demonstrate his liberality. The basic soma sacrifice, for instance, incorporated communal feasts using the slaughtered animal and the pressed soma (Drury 1981:36). What is significant is that detailed prescriptions pertaining to distribution in this context are lacking.[43] This would indicate that while customary procedures were probably followed, these were not granted recognition within the brahmanical tradition. There is also some evidence of attempts to restrict participation in such sharing by explicitly defining eligible participants. For instance, part of the oblation offered during the animal sacrifice could be given to the amātyas, defined as the patnī, putra, and bhrātṛ, i.e., the wife, son, and brother of the sacrificer respectively (ApSS 11.16.13-14).

In contrast to this, the other element of exchange associated with the sacrifice, the dakṣiṇā, is discussed in considerable detail. This is not surprising given the fact that the brāhmaṇas were the exclusive recipients in this case.[44] While the soma sacrifice is described as śata dakṣiṇā (with a hundred, possibly cattle as dakṣiṇā,

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[43] A few texts (e.g., SSS 3.8.10) implicitly refer to such exchanges, recommending gifts to atithis or guests in the context of the soma sacrifice.

[44] There are some indications that recipients were ideally confined to specific gotras. While the Ātreyas were preferred, the Kanakas and Kaśyapas were categorically excluded (ApSS 13.6.12, 13.7.5). This probably reflects an attempt to assert control over the ritual on the part of specific groups of brāhmaṇas.

e.g., SB 4.3.4.3), the dakṣiṇā could occasionally be raised to a thousand (e.g., SB 4.5.1.11).[45] Variations of the soma sacrifice such as the dvādaśāha were also commonly associated with gifts of cattle, in this case numbering twelve hundred (e.g., ApSS 21.5.9).[46]

Dakṣiṇā, as is widely recognised, served a range of purposes. In the first place, it was significant in material terms, implying as it did, a transfer of resources from the yajamāna to the officiating priests. The importance of the material transaction in this context is explicitly recognised in the Śrauta Sūtras. For instance the officiating priests were expected to find out about the dakṣiṇā to be offered before undertaking to perform it (ApSS 10.1.3),[47] offering the generous yajamāna an incentive by stating that giving a plentiful dakṣiṇā was a means of converting an ordinary sacrifice into an auspicious one (ibid.:10.20.4).

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[45]The BSS (25.4) likewise refers to the sacrifice as dvādaśa-śata dakṣiṇā (with a dakṣiṇā consisting of a hundred and twelve, presumably cattle) although elsewhere (ibid.:16.9) it is raised to a sahasra-dakṣiṇā (thousand, presumably cattle) sacrifice. Similarl the SSS (7.17.18) recommends a minimum of twenty-one, but recognises the possibility of giving and receiving a thousand, especially for the dvādaśāha (ibid.:13.14.7). The ApSS (10.26.1-7) suggests that the dakṣiṇā could vary from four cows with gold decorations to twenty-one to the unlikely figure of thirty thousand, or an unlimite number. In one instance (ASS 5.3.17) the giving away of the kanyā or daughter of the yajamāna is recommended in this context. Such variations are recognised for component parts of the sacrifice as well. For instance, while hiraṇya or gold was recommended as dakṣiṇā for the udavasanīya iṣṭi of the soma sacrifice, an ox could be given as a substitute (SB 4.5.1.15). Such variations indicate that the sacrifice could have been performed on at least two levels· one relatively simple, and the other more complex.

[46]The dakṣiṇā for the gārgatrirātra also consisted of a thousand (SSS 16.22.15-18, ApSS 22.15.6).

[47]Elsewhere (SSS 5.1.10) the priest was required to find out whether the sacrifice was adakṣiṇā (without a dakṣiṇā) or not before undertaking to perform it.

Although the overt and immediate material transaction was one-way, the underlying assumption was that both parties would benefit in the long run. For instance, the giving of gold was thought to bring joy to the recipient and longevity to the donor, while a gift of cows was thought to confer joy on the recipient and more cows on the donor (SSS 7.18.1,2). These notions reflect the underlying assumption that "the dakṣiṇā gift establishes or is expressive of a generative alliance between the giving and receiving parties" (Heesterman 1959:245). The gift may also have been a means of extending the dominance of the donor over the donee,[48] although this is not explicitly acknowledged in the brahmanical tradition.

The exchange of dakṣiṇā was, at the same time, a means of distinguishing between those eligible to participate in it--viz., the yajamāna and the officiating priests, and those excluded from it. The latter category included the rest of the participants present at the sacrifice as well as those who were absent. While participation in such exchanges did not imply a monopoly over the basic productive resources or produce, the ability to convert such resources into social prestige was thus clearly restricted.[49] In other words, the ability to give and receive legitimately was made explicit, reinforcing related notions of socio-economic status. In this sense, dakṣiṇā was clearly a gift exchange establishing a

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[48] This is a characteristic of gift-exchanges, where the gift-debtor is often placed in a subordinate position (Gregory 1982:19) as he is obliged to the donor (ibid.:51).

[49] As Gledhill (1988:15) observes: "Perhaps, in reality, it is non-subsistence resources which are 'basic' from the point of view of understanding increasing political centralisation and the opening up of an unbridgeable social gulf between rulers and ruled."

relationship between the subjects who participated in the exchange (Gregory 1982:19)[50] linking those who claimed access to and control over the ritual to those who aspired to participate in the realm of the sacred. This connection, moreover, was part of the process of legitimising the change in the status of the sacrificer.

At another level, dakṣiṇā was used to reiterate the symbolism associated with the ritual. For instance, the dakṣiṇā prescribed for the gārgatrirātra consisted of a thousand cattle, of which the thousandth was considered symbolic of the totality and hence of the regeneration of the cosmos (Heesterman 1959:247).

Thus, the human śreṣṭha evidently utilised some of the resources he acquired in the performance of sacrifices.[51] These in turn were expected to generate prosperity, being analogous to the rituals performed by or for Prajāpati. At the same time, these rituals were associated with the sharing of resources amongst the participants. However, this sharing was characterised by a basic assymetry. Of the two resources to which the śreṣṭha laid claim, paśu and anna, the former was shared with the priests as dakṣiṇā, whereas the latter was probably distributed amongst all the participants in the course of the feasts accompanying the ritual. This

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[50] According to Gonda (1965:209): "Although institutionalized gift-giving was an important technique of distributing and redistributing wealth, the process of giving also meant to place oneself in relation to another person by means of an object which is a part of one's own self. The gift establishes, or is expressive of, a bond between the giver and the recipient."

[51] There is incidental evidence to suggest that the human śreṣṭha may have been associated with the distribution of resources in non-ritual contexts as well. The beneficiaries were, as in the case of Indra, those who were loyal. This is apparent from the statement (SB 10.3.5.9, BAU 1.3.18) that if a man tried to rival (pratibubhūṣati) a śreṣṭha, he was unable to support his dependents, whereas he was able to do so if he was faithful.

implied that some participants had access to relatively imperishable and reproducible forms of wealth, whereas the others were granted immediate but transient benefits. In other words, the śreṣṭha's generosity, unlike Indra's, was socially differentiated.[52] What is more, his generosity would have contributed to the process of socio-economic differentiation and the resultant conflicts and tensions, to which we will next turn.

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[52] It is this which probably explains the gradual marginalisation of the notion of Indra as maghavan, reflected, for instance, in the Rāmāyaṇa (Brockington 1984:196), where this epithet is rather uncommon.

VI

The links that were emerging or being established between the śreṣṭha and the material basis of society thus contained possibilities of conflict centring on the control and distribution of productive and reproductive resources. Some of these were directly related to the process of acquiring śraiṣṭhya, whereas in other cases, the śreṣṭha was expected to intervene in and resolve tensions and disputes. As we shall see, such interventions were almost inevitably partisan and were important in ensuring the support of some social categories as opposed to others, for the śreṣṭha. Broadly, three major social issues may be identified, connected with defining the varṇa hierarchy, the relationship amongst kinsmen, and gender stratification respectively. As may be expected, the roles envisaged for the divine and human śreṣṭhas vis-a-vis these issues and the means adopted to handle them reveal significant variations, suggestive of a changing situation.

As is well known, the only reference to the four varṇas in the Rg Veda occurs in the relatively late Puruṣasūkta (RV 10.90.12). The paucity of references to varṇa categories in the text suggests that these had not acquired the social significance which was assigned to them later. In contrast to this, defining the varṇa hierarchy emerges as an important problem in the later Vedic tradition. This is evident from speculation regarding its origin, which often justified specific features of the hierarchy, and from attempts to regulate relationships amongst members of various varṇas. Both the divine and the human śreṣṭhas were associated with these problems, although in different ways.

Of the divine śreṣṭhas, Indra was rarely associated with the creation of the varṇa hierarchy--one of the few occasions on which he was thought of as endowing each varṇa with its characteristic attributes (PVB 13.4.17) results in a rather unique order, with the rājaṅya placed first, followed by the brāhmaṇa and vaiśya. This peculiar arrangement is not surprising, given the fact that Indra was frequently identified with the second varṇa. He was often conceived of as the embodiment of kṣatra (e.g., RV 6.25.8, SB 2.4.3.6) which refers both to the abstract quality of power and to the second varṇa in the conventional hierarchy. Besides, in the ritual context, Indra was associated with the rājaṅya who was required to use verses addressed to the deity or offer oblations to him in the course of sacrifices such as the agnyādheya (SSS 2.3.6) and the soma sacrifice which formed part of the rājasūya (ApSS 18.21.11). At the same time, although Indra's help was invoked in a variety of conflicts in the early Vedic tradition, these were rarely conceived of in varṇa terms.[53]

In the later Vedic tradition, Indra's identity with the kṣatra was reiterated in myths relating to the order and relationship amongst the varṇas. In one instance (BSS 18.35) Agni (reprsenting the first varṇa) and Indra were supposed to have prospered jointly, attaining strength and supreme power. However, this prosperity was regarded as the result of Agni's leadership (AB 2.10.5), it being explicitly stated that Indra and Agni do not prosper, whereas Agni and Indra do. Elsewhere (SSS 14.29.1,2)

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[53] Even when varṇa categories were used, the context was a two-fold rather than a four-fold one. For instance, Indra was invoked to protect the ārya varṇa against the dasyus (RV 3.34.9).

they were envisaged as engaged in a contest to attain supremacy over the devas. The devas, alarmed at the possible consequences of this contest, performed a sacrifice[54] which evidently conciliated both deities.

The myths suggest a certain amount of tension in defining the relationship between the brahma and kṣatra and point to two possible resolutions--one acknowledging the supremacy of the former, and a second emphasising their unity of interests and mutual support. A third possibility of open conflict resulting in the explicit defeat of one by the other is occasionally explored in the references to Indra's offence of brahmahatyā or bhrūṇahatya (the killing of a brāhmaṇa, e.g., TS 2.5.1, VDS 5.8) for which he was supposedly punished by being deprived of soma (AB 7.35.2, SB 12.7.1.10), a way out being suggested by transferring the guilt incurred. In other words, an attempt was made by the brāhmaṇas to convert a physical defeat into a moral victory and maintain an uneasy balance.

Indra symbolised kṣatra in myths exploring the kṣatra-viś relationship as well. Thus, an offering to Indra and the Maruts was recommended (BSS 13.19) to ensure that the kṣatra and viś were in accord with one another. In another instance (PVB 6.10.10-11) the joint invocation of Indra and the Maruts was regarded as a means of ensuring that the viś did not desert the rājaṅya.[55]

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[54] This was recommended for the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya on the occasion when the latter appointed the former as a purohita, a situation in which the relative status of the appointer and the appointee would have been ambiguous.

[55] The viś was made anapakrāmukā in this context.

However, the connection between the kṣatra or rājaṅya and the viś was not always regarded as desirable. This is evident from the discussion on the offering of soma to Indra with the Maruts (SB 4.3.3.15-16). This was compared to a man desirous of victory eating food from the same vessel as the viś as a means of winning their support, but the practice was dismissed as evil, and a separate cup for Mahendra (literally the great Indra) recommended instead. This was probably a means of asserting the relative importance of leader and led in ensuring success in military ventures. The emphasis on the role of the former would point to the growing socio-political differentiation between the two. This would also explain the possibility of discord between the kṣatra and the viś which was sought to be resolved through myths and rituals.

Prajāpati, unlike Indra, was frequently associated with the creation of the varṇa hierarchy amongst other things (e.g., AB 7.34.1, SB 2.1.4.12).[56] However, he was not assigned a position within the hierarchy, being placed, in a sense, above it.[57]

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[56] Even in later texts where the origin of the hierarchy is taken for granted, Prajāpati is occasionally cited as the authority for prescriptions pertaining to the varṇa hierarchy, declaring, in one instance (BDS 2.4.7.15) that brāhmaṇas who did not offer twilight prayers could be treated as śūdras by the rājā.

[57] Occasionally, however, his position was considered to be analogous to that of the rājaṅya who, being one, ruled over many (SB 5.1.5.14). However, by and large he was not identified with any particular varṇa. This aloofness resembles that discernible in his links to economic resources, and contrasts with the position of other deities such as Indra and the Maruts who, as noted earlier, were often regarded as representatives of specific varṇas.

The creation of the varṇa hierarchy ascribed to Prajāpati very often involved variations of the Puruṣasūkta (e.g., PVB 6.1.6-11).[58] However, unlike the puruṣa or the primeval being who was not envisaged as controlling the process, Prajāpati was assigned a determinant role, and the very process of creation was used to justify the hierarchical relationship amongst the varṇas. Thus the 'eating' of the vaiśya by the brāhmaṇa and the rājaṅya was justified on the ground that the former was created from the lower organs (including the generative ones) of Prajāpati (PVB 6.1.10), while the śūdra was denied access to rituals as he had been created without a deity (ibid.:6.1.11), the entire hierarchy being viewed as a means of distinguishing between good and evil (ibid.:6.1.12).[59] In another instance (AB 7.34.1) Prajāpati was associated with the creation of the yajña or sacrifice, brahma and kṣatra, and two types of prajā, hutāda (oblation-eaters) and ahutāda (those debarred from eating oblations), with the brāhmaṇas in the first category and the rājaṅya, vaiśya, and śūdra in the second. Such myths evidently sought to justify the exploitation of one varṇa by another and to define access to the realm of the sacred.

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[58] In this case, Agni, the brāhmaṇa, spring, the trivṛt stoma and gāyatrī metre were thought to be produced from his mouth, Indra, the rājaṅya, summer, the pañcadaśa stoma and the triṣṭubh metre from his breast, the vaiśya, saptadaśa stoma, jagatī metre, and Viśvedevas from his middle and reproductive organ, and the śudra, ekaviṁśa stoma, and anuṣṭubh metre from his feet.

[59] As Ghoshal (1966b:22) points out, the Puruṣasūkta and its variants "invoke the doctrine of the ordination of the status and functions of the four castes by the Divine Will."

Nevertheless, not all creation myths reflected the hierarchical pattern so explicitly. In one instance (SB 2.1.4.11-12) Prajāpati was conceived of as using the three syllables bhuḥ, bhuvar, and svar to create the earth, intermediate space, and heaven, the brahma, kṣatra and viś, and the ātman, prajā, and paśu. Here the lowest varṇa was equated with the highest spatial category. The existence of such variations would point to the relatively fluid nature of the hierarchy which permitted a range of speculations.

The possibility of such alternatives is reflected in the role assigned to the Maruts, the divine viś, in myths. The Indra-Maruts relationship, referred to earlier, was suggestive of strains and tensions within the kṣatra-viś relationship. The Prajāpati-Maruts connection points to opposition to the entire order whose creation was ascribed to Prajāpati. In one instance (SB 2.5.1.12,13) the Maruts were conceived of as threatening to destroy the prajā created by Prajāpati and were ultimately placated with a share of the soma sacrifice. That the resolution envisaged was in terms of conciliation rather than destruction or suppression would indicate the relative strength of the viś vis-a-vis the other categories of the emerging hierarchy, a suggestion which is borne out by the rituals associated with the acquisition of śraiṣṭhya.

On the ritual plane, the soma sacrifice which legitimated śraiṣṭhya provided an occasion for communicating statements regarding the attributes of the varṇas and their mutual relationships. Thus, while prayers were offered for the protection of the brahma, kṣatra, and viś in this context (BSS 7.7), the goals envisaged varied according to the varṇa of the yajamāna

including brahmavarcas or priestly lustre for the brāhmaṇa, indriya or prowess for the rājaṅya, and paśu and annādya for the vaiśya (AB 1.1.5).[60] Attempts were made to ensure these varied goals by invoking specific deities, Bṛhaspati, Indra, and the Viśvedevas, for the brāhmaṇa, rājaṅya, and vaiśya respectively (ApSS 18.21.11), and through the use of distinct metres for the chants employed in the course of the ritual (BSS 10.17).[61] The use of such variations meant that while the sacrifice was open to men of the first three varṇas, its very performance would have differentiated amongst them, by focusing on the distinct attributes associated with yajamānas belonging to different categories.

Relations with the fourth varṇa were also regulated through the ritual, as the man initiated for the soma sacrifice could not talk directly to a śūdra (SB 3.1.1.10), doing so indirectly only if absolutely necessary. This would have conveyed the notion of the śūdra as potentially polluting in the ritual context. Besides, in ritual actions such as washing the seat on which the sacrificial soma was placed, the brāhmaṇa was expected to pour water while

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60 Likewise, the ApSS (4.6.2) states that the brahma could acquire tejas or lustre through the sacrifice, the kṣatra ojas or strength, and the viś puṣṭi or nourishment. Such differential goals are also evident in the sautrāmaṇī, another sacrifice which legitimated śraiṣṭhya, where mantras used for a brāhmaṇa sacrificer referred to learning, those for a kṣatriya to victory, and those for a vaiśya to nourishment (LŚS 5.4.19).

61 In this case the gāyatrī metre was prescribed for the brāhmaṇa and the triṣṭubh for the rājaṅya. Very often, the formulae varied according to the varṇa of the yajamāna (ApSS 10.12.8). Visible symbols such as the colour of the cow used for the exchange of soma could also vary according to varṇa (ibid.:10.22.5).

the śūdra washed the seat (BSS 6.17).[62] Such regulated communication and gestures conveyed important messages concerning relative status to all those who participated in or witnessed the ceremony.

The soma sacrifice was also a means of distinguishing amongst brāhmaṇas, as the officiating priests had to be those whose claims to ārṣeya origins or descent from Vedic seers were accepted (SSS 5.1.1, ApSS 10.1.1) and who were physically unblemished, young, and learned (SSS 5.1.1).[63] Clearly, the very ability to perform such a ritual would have contributed to the prestige and renown of the priests.[64]

Nevertheless, not all varṇa related statements were unambiguous. For instance, the yajamāna who was initiated for the sacrifice was regarded as a brāhmaṇa even though he may have been a rājaṅya or a vaiśya (ApSS 10.11.6). While this could mean an assertion of the exclusive right of brāhmaṇas to participate in the sacrifice, it also provided for the temporary brahmanisation of the yajamāna, rendering the position of the brāhmaṇa more accessible, and challenging the claims of the brāhmaṇas to a unique status.

More important is the evidence for conflicting goals of the sacrifice vis-a-vis the varṇa hierarchy. While the sacrifice was occasionally viewed as a means of ensuring the well-being of the

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[62] Atha aparau āsandīpādau avantarena brāhmaṇaḥ abhiṣiñcati, śūdraḥ prakṣālayati.

[63] The gotra and pravara, which traced descent from recognised seers, and the immediate patrilineal ancestry of the priest were referred to in the course of the sacrifice (BSS 6.5.).

[64] As opposed to this, brāhmaṇas who did not perform the soma sacrifice were condemned (ADS 2.6.11.35).

undifferentiated viś (e.g., SB 4.2.4.23),[65] it also provided an occasion for defining the kṣatra-viś relationship, where alternatives were explored. On the one hand the ritual was used to ensure that the viś was submissive (apratyudāminī, literally not refractory, AB 6.29.5). However, the alternative was known, being explicitly forbidden in some cases (ibid.).[66]

If the soma sacrifice could be used to render the kṣatra more powerful than the viś and vice versa (ApSS 14.6.8,9), other sacrifices legitimating śraiṣṭhya contained categorical statements favouring what emerged as the "proper" order and relationship. The dvādaśāha, for instance, was used to ensure that the kṣatra and viś followed the brāhmaṇa (PVB 11.11.8, 15.6.3), whereas in the course of the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.7.3.15), the cups of liquor (surā) representing the viś and those of milk symbolic of the kṣatra were drawn so as to ensure that the kṣatra and the viś remained connected to one another.

The rituals associated with śraiṣṭhya point to the importance of defining the kṣatra-viś relationship, which, as we had seen, was recognised as crucial in the Indra-Maruts mythology as well. At the same time, they point to the difficulties in ensuring the support and subordination of the viś. While such problems could be resolved on the mythical plane by envisaging the creation of

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[65] In this context a prayer was offered to ensure that the viś was asapatnā-samanasā (i.e., without rivals and of one mind), to ensure the attainment of prosperity, fame and the ability to eat.

[66] Similarly, the viś could be used to destroy the rāṣṭra through variations in the placement of the pot containing soma and the pressing stones (LSS 1.10.13).

social categories in terms of a well-ordered, inviolable, "natural" hierarchy, the evidence of a range of speculation suggests that enforcing a uniform ideal or norm was not possible. In this context it is not surprising that although there are occasional references to suggest that the śreṣṭha should be a rājaṅya (AB 1.5.2), the śreṣṭha was not expected to uphold the varṇa hierarchy. Clearly, the position of the human śreṣṭha was closer to that of Indra, caught between a viś which could and probably did exercise the option of moving out of his sphere of control, thus weakening his claims to power, and the brāhmaṇas who attempted to assert a monopoly over the rituals which legitimised his position, and offered support, but at a price. Situated thus, the śreṣṭha was not in a position to establish or maintain the norms governing inter-varṇa relationships, which were acquiring increasing importanc during the period under consideration.

VII

The relationship amongst kinsmen was in a sense more central to the definition and acquisition of śraiṣṭhya. This is not surprising, given the fact that the position of the śreṣṭha was defined in terms of svās or samānas as noted earlier (Section II). While the first term suggests being related (literally one's own), the second stressed equality such as would have existed amongst kinsmen of the same generation. As noted earlier, the very assertion of śraiṣṭhya in such a situation was potentially a tension-ridden process, requiring as it did, the support of kinsfolk, from whom the śreṣṭha at the same time sought to distinguish himself. As we shall see, the emergence of śraiṣṭhya was accompanied by the transformation of relationships amongst kinsmen--involving, on the one hand, growing hostility amongst kinsmen of the same generation, and on the other, a strengthening of ties linking kinsmen of different generations.

The Indra-Vṛtra struggle evidently provided one of the most powerful analogies for conflicts amongst kinsmen. This was one sphere where an early mythical tradition was substantially modified to reflect new concerns. Victory over Vṛtra (e.g., RV 2.11.18, PVB 8.5.2, SB 4.3.3.5) was basic to Indra's characterisation in the early Vedic tradition, as is evident from the fact that Vṛtrahan or Vṛtra-killer is his commonest epithet (Griswold 1971: 207), being used over a hundred times in the Ṛg Veda (Choudhuri 1981:4).[67]

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[67] The importance of this conflict is also reflected in attempts to extend the use of the epithet to other deities such as Agni (RV 1.74.3), Soma (ibid.:1.91.5), and Sarasvatī (Vṛtraghnī, ibid.: 6.61.7). Indra's victory overy Vṛtra and his role as the leader of the devas against the asuras are "frequently alluded to" in what Brockington (1984:195) identifies as the first stage of the Rāmāyaṇa.

In the early Vedic context, the Indra-Vṛtra conflict has been interpreted at a number of levels (Varenne 1978:379-382, Lahiri 1982:1)--as a struggle between the forces of nature specifically of rain and drought, or light and darkness, as a social conflict between Aryans and non-Aryans, and as a cosmogonic myth. What is perhaps more significant for the present discussion is that certain new elements were introduced into the conflict in the later Vedic tradition. These include the identification of Vṛtra with Soma (e.g., SB 3.4.3.13), which, as Lahiri (1982:173) points out, "is not hinted at in the Ṛg Veda."[68] This was significant because Soma was important both as a deity and as a typical divine rājā. Related to this was an element of ambiguity vis-a-vis the outcome of the conflict--Indra's victory was no longer regarded as an unalloyed triumph--although he was conceived of as becoming mahat or great through this act (e.g., SB 1.6.4.21, AA 1.1.1.2),[69] he was thought to be unsure of himself and took refuge in a cow (PVB 12.5.21) and the anuṣṭubh metre (AB 3.12.4). Further, he was regarded as being devoid of strength after the struggle, and had to be restored through rituals (PVB 18.5.2). Not only was he weakened, he was viewed as impure, and the sin of vṛtrahatyā or the killing of Vṛtra had to be expiated by performing a paurṇamāsa iṣṭi (full moon sacrifice)

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[68] A reference which might suggest the beginning of such an equation occurs in the relatively late eighth maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda (RV 8.78.7), where the stomach of the Vṛtra-killer and the soma-drinker are regarded as synonymous. Occasionally, moreover, the drinking of soma was thought to stimulate Indra in his role of Vṛtra-killer (ibid.:1.80.2).

[69] In one instance (RV 8.12.22) the devas were conceived of as placing Indra in front (pura) on account of his having killed Vṛtra.

in the course of the agnicayana (SB 6.2.2.19).[70]

This notion of an ambiguous contest is reiterated on the ritual plane as well, where a part of the dakṣiṇā given for the jyotiṣṭoma, a variation of the agniṣṭoma, was regarded as a vaira (PVB 16.1.12) or wergeld, meant to propitiate the devas who were thought to be hostile after the killing of Soma, which was equated with the slaying of a brave man, vīraha (BSS 25.4).

Another simultaneous development was related to the characterisation of the asuras. In the early Vedic tradition, virtually all the major devas were regarded as asuras in a positive sense. These included Varuṇa (RV 1.24.14), Savitṛ (ibid.:4.53.1), Indra (ibid.:3.38.4), Agni (ibid.:3.3.4), Soma and Rudra (ibid.: 6.74.1), and Dyaus (ibid.:1.131.1).[71] Besides, asuratva was regarded as a basic attribute of the devas (ibid.:3.55.1).[72] Even

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[70] The notion of Indra's impurity is reiterated in other situations as well. For instance, he was thought to consider himself impure (aśuddha) after abandoning some sages (yatis) to the hyenas, and purified himself through the śuddhāśuddhīya sāman (PVB 14.11.28) Elsewhere (ibid.:17.5.1) he supposedly heard an inauspicious voice c killing Tvaṣṭṛ's son and sought Agni's help. Indra's ambiguous role in this range of conflicts and its supposed consequences are reflect in the statement (AB 7.35.2) that the devas deprived Indra, and, by extension, the kṣatra, of a share in the soma sacrifice on account c his behaviour towards Viśvarūpa, Vṛtra, the yatis, Arurmaghas, and Bṛhaspati. Elsewhere (TS 2.5.1, VDS 5.8) the notion of menstruation as impure is justified on the grounds that it is the result of the guilt of brahmahatyā, the killing of brāhmaṇas, transferred to women by Indra.

[71] Here, however, Dyaus was regarded as an asura who bowed down to Indra.

[72] According to Rajwade (1919:18), of a total of 105 occurrence of the term asura in the Rg Veda, only 15 are negative, while Chattopadhyaya (1935:34) states that 14 out of 108 occurrences are negative. Most of the negative references occur in the tenth maṇḍal (Paranjpe 1975:195). Hale (1986:181) argues that the conceptualisation of the asuras in the later Vedic tradition reflects a tendency to mythologise human enemies into enemies of the gods.

in the later Vedic tradition, where the term asura acquired negative connotations and the devas and asuras were conceptualised as irreconcilable enemies, their common origin as sons of Prajāpati is frequently reiterated (BAU 1.3.1, SSS 10.14.8).[73]

As in the struggle against Vṛtra, Indra was conceived of as playing an active role in the deva-asura conflict (e.g., SB 9.2.3.3)[74] and once again, his participation in this was occasionally viewed as an ambiguous, or even evil act (akārya, literally that which should not be done, PVB 22.14.2), which had to be expiated by the performance of a sacrifice. At the same time, many of the achievements ascribed to Indra in the early Vedic tradition, such as the destruction of puras (e.g., RV 1.63.2), of the Dasyus (ibid.:2.11.18), Dāsas (ibid.:3.12.6), the serpent Ahi (ibid.:2.11.2), and of the Paṇis (ibid.:6.20.4), are rarely referred to in the later Vedic tradition.[75] Such transformations in mythology were, moreover, related to the ritual plane, where the deva-asura and/or the Indra-Vṛtra conflict were frequently equated with that between the yajamāna and his bhrātṛvya or sapatna (e.g., PVB 12.3.14).

Both the terms bhrātṛvya and sapatna have aroused a considerabl amount of speculation. The former literally meant a brother-like

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[73] In the former case, the asuras are described as the elder brothers of the devas. The hostility and virtual equality of the devas and asuras is reiterated in the Rāmāyaṇa (Brockington 1984: 203). In view of such connections, attempts to identify the asuras with the Assyrians (Bhandarkar 1933:97), i.e., with a completely alien group, do not seem to be justified.

[74] While Prajāpati was not envisaged as having a role in the Indra-Vṛtra conflict, he was occasionally conceived of as tilting the scales in favour of the devas in the deva-asura conflict (e.g., PVB 12.13.27).

[75] In the post-Vedic context, although the epithet purandara is used for Indra in the early sections of the Rāmāyaṇa, it is rather rare (Brockington 1984:196).

man[76] and may have meant the father's brother's son, although the term became virtually synonymous with enmity (VI:s.v.). The process whereby a kinship term acquired such negative connotations has been variously explained in terms of the fights between brothers and cousins for property (Apte 1954:47) which assumed importance with the beginnings of settled life (Rai 1974:28, Vaidya 1928:290), and in terms of the possible conflicts amongst brothers-in-law in an exogamous system (Banerjea 1963:60).[77]

The term sapatna "is a curious masculine formed by analogy from sapatnī, co-wife and so female rival" (VI:s.v.). However, the term sapatnī, from which sapatna is allegedly derived, often had a positive connotation in the early Vedic tradition. For instance, the term occasionally refers to a harmonious feminine duality, probably the Heaven and Earth, or Night and Day (RV 3.1.10), and to the wives of Agni (ibid.:3.6.4)[78] while in the later Vedic tradition the masculine form of the word is much more common than the feminine form.

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[76] Its construction may have been similar to pitṛvya (father's brother, i.e., a father-like man, Banerjea 1963:56).

[77] Other possibilities suggested include a quarrel between Iranians and Aryans (Vaidya 1926:290, Apte 1954:47). It should be noted that hostility per se is by no means unknown in the Ṛg Veda, where a range of terms was used to denote enemies, including amitra (literally not-friend, RV 3.18.2), abhimāti (ibid.:3.24.1), arāti (ibid.), and śatru (ibid.:3.54.22). Besides, prayers were offered to ensure success against the Dāsas and Dasyus (e.g., ibid.:6.25.2). However, unlike the terms bhrātṛvya and sapatna, none of these had kinship connotations. In other words, the enemy was earlier conceived of as existing without rather than within the kin group.

[78] Examples of the negative usage of the term are confined to the relatively late tenth maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda. Two sūktas, meant to ensure the destruction of the sapatnī and the sapatna respectively (RV 10.145, 166), deal with such rivalry. In the former, Indrāṇī claims to drive away her sapatnīs and have her husband solely to herself. However, in the later Vedic tradition, men rather than women were expected to pray for the destruction of sapatnas.

Alternatively, the term may be interpreted as men sharing a common wife.[79] Given the fact that actual examples of polyandry are rather rare, it is possible that what is meant by the term is rivalry between men related through a woman who may have been the wife of one of them. In any case, the sapatna, like the bhrātṛvya, belonged to the same generation as the yajamāna.

Both the mythological and the human conflicts were conceived of as centring around the control of material resources. These consisted of paśu (PVB 8.4.6-7), including, occasionally, the mythical kāmadhuk or wish-fulfilling cow (ibid.:11.5.9), and anna.[80] As noted earlier (Section IV), these were the very resources which were regarded as essential for the acquisition of śraiṣṭhya. What is also significant is that both the yajamāna and the bhrātṛvya were conceived of as possessing identical resources and efforts were made by one to assert complete control over such resources to the total exclusion of the other.[81]

A second area of conflict pertained to attitudes towards and access to or control over the sacrificial cult. Here, there is some divergence between the deva-asura conflict and that between

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[79] Samānā patnī vartate yasya saḥ sapatnaḥ.

[80] Special sacrifices to deprive the bhrātṛvya of his annādya and to destroy his goṣṭha or cow pen were also prescribed (BSS 3.21). Attempts were also made to deprive the sapatna of oṣadhis or plants through the ritual (SB 3.6.1.9,10).

[81] The conflict inherent in this is reflected in the characterisation of the asuras. On the one hand they were regarded as barren soil (SB 9.5.1.7), while on the other hand they were thought to be familiar with all major agricultural operations, and could even obtain crops without ploughing (ibid.:1.6.1.2-4). This would suggest that their prosperity, like that of the bhrātṛvya, was worthless to the sacrificer unless and until it could be totally appropriated.

the yajamāna and his bhrātṛvya. In the later Vedic tradition, the attitudes of the devas and asuras vis-a-vis rituals is often conceived in terms of outright opposition. In one instance (SB 5.1.1.1), the asuras are said to have offered into their own mouths out of excessive pride (atimāna), this leading to their decline. The devas, by contrast, were conceived of as making offerings to one another, consequently prospering and attaining Prajāpati or the yajña (ibid.:5.1.1.2). More generally, the asuras were conceived of as being hostile to all sacred activities (CU 8.8.5). Thus, they did not make gifts, lacked faith, and did not sacrifice.[82]

Elsewhere, the deva-asura conflict is envisaged within the ritual framework, both attempting to establish control over the cult. It is this aspect which is reiterated in the course of the yajamāna-bhrātṛvya struggle.[83] Thus, knowledge of how the devas succeeded in wresting control of the cult from the asuras was thought to enable the sacrificer to take away the yajña from his bhrātṛvya (PVB 8.3.4), the sacrifices appropriated in this context being identified as the daily agnihotra, the fortnightly darśa-pūrṇamāsa, the cāturmāsyas associated with the agrarian cycle,

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[82] Occasionally (SB 9.5.1.12-17), the struggle between the devas and asuras is formulated in ethical terms. Initially, both the devas and the asuras were conceived of as speaking both truth and falsehood (satya and anṛta). Then the devas took to speaking only the truth, as a result of which they became weak and poor, but prospered ultimately, whereas the asuras prospered initially, but came to naught with the passage of time.

[83] The first aspect of outright hostility towards the cult is characteristic of enemies in the early Vedic tradition. For instance, opponents such as the Dāsas or Dasyus are described as anyavrata (RV 10.22.8), i.e., following different practices, ayajvān (ibid.:8.70.11) or devoid of sacrifices, and adeva (ibid.: 9.105.6), literally without gods. As opposed to this the devas were associated with spreading the āryavrata (ibid.:10.65.11).

and the soma sacrifice (ibid.:8.6.5-7).[84]

Despite such attempts to assert unilateral control over the cult, there is evidence to suggest that rivals very often sought to outdo one another in the performance of rituals. This is indicated by the provision for alternative sacrifices--if the bhrātṛvya performed the anukriyā, the yajamāna could outsmart him by performing the parikriyā, and if the bhrātṛvya persisted in performing the latter sacrifice, the yajamāna could outsmart him by performing the atikriyā (SSS 14.42.6).

In other instances, attempts were made to ensure the subordination of the bhrātṛvya to the yajamāna by symbolically depriving him of his power of speech (PVB 9.1.13) and rendering him powerless to retort (apratīvādin, ibid.:10.7.3). Attempts were also made to deprive the sapatna of their faculty of speech (SB 3.2.1.24) and strength (ibid.:4.5.3.4).

Occasionally, the struggle was conceived of as a cosmic one on both the mythical and the ritual plane. Thus the devas and asuras were envisaged as struggling for the saṁvatsara or Prajāpati (e.g. SB 1.5.3.2) or for the spatial directions (ibid.: 13.8.1.5). On the human plane, the basic units of time, day and night, could be obtained by the sacrificer who performed the dvādaśāha correctly, these being lost to his bhrātṛvya in case of mistakes (AB 5.24.5). Elsewhere (PVB 5.5.15) the conflict was

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[84] Elsewhere (SB 11.5.9.4,5), there is a more general reference to the sacrificer acquiring all sacrifices (sarva yajña) from his bhrātṛvya. On the mythical plane, Indra was likewise thought to acquire the ṛc, yajus, and sāman formulae, basic to the ritual, from Vṛtra (ibid.:5.5.5.3-5).

viewed as one for the control of the sun, or for that of the three worlds (SSS 4.12.10).[85]

As may be expected, the sacrifices which legitimised the position of the śreṣṭha were frequently regarded as a means of destroying the bhrātṛvya and his powers as well. The use of verses referring to the slaying of Vṛtra by Indra was recommended in the context of the basic soma sacrifice (AB 1.1.4), this being considered as a means of equating the yajamāna with Indra. Besides, prayers were offered to ensure the destruction of both sapatnas and bhrātṛvyas in this context (AB 1.4.7, SB 3.5.1.33, BSS 6.28).[86] Destruction of such rivals also figured amongst the goals of sacrifices such as the dvādaśāha (AB 5.24.5), which legitimated claims to śraiṣṭhya.[87]

The Indra-Vṛtra or deva-asura/yajamāna-bhrātṛvya/sapatna struggle was thus part of the process of acquiring śraiṣṭhya. The conflict moreover, "centres on the relative legitimacy of similar claims, not the relative merits of substantially different

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[85] Similarly, victory over the sapatnas was envisaged in terms of excluding them fron the three worlds (e.g., SB 1.9.3.11) and from the saṁvatsara (ibid.; 4.2.4.12).

[86] In general, the knowledge of the sacrifice and its performance was thought to ensure the destruction of bhrātṛvyas (BSS 14.8).

[87] Indra's role in destroying Vṛtra and hence the bhrātṛvya or sapatna was frequently referred to in the context of such rituals. For instance, in the context of the soma sacrifice, he was described as one who troubles the bhrātṛvya (BSS 7.12), a specific offering to Indra Vṛtratu (the destroyer of Vṛtra) being recommended for the bhrātṛvyavat (ApSS 3.16.3). Besides, Indra was invoked to destroy the sapatnas of the sacrificer in the context of the new and full moon sacrifice (BSS 1.19), special iṣṭis to him being recommended for the bhrātṛvyavat (ibid.; 17.47), whose enemies were symbolically destroyed with the help of Indra's vajra (ibid.; 3.27).

programmes" (Brumfiel 1989:127), features characteristic of a factional struggle for power or prestige between more or less similarly endowed groups. Unlike conflicts between varṇa categories, moreover, this was a situation in which co-existence was not considered possible.

And yet, the destruction of kinsmen or the bonds which linked them presented problems. These were in part moral or ethical, evident in the ambiguous attitude towards the victors in the conflict. Incidental references indicate that the acquisition or attainment of śraiṣṭhya was regarded as evil, reflected in the notion that he who attains śraiṣṭhya becomes sinful (AB 1.3.2).[88] Such a notion is also implied in the prescription to perform a variation of the agnyādheya in order to attain śraiṣṭhya (ApSS 5.24.4). While this could lead to the desired result, pock marks were supposed to erupt on the face of the man who performed it.[89]

A development which ran parallel to the hostility towards the bhrātṛvya and the sapatna was the link, often bordering on identity, envisaged between the jyeṣṭha, literally the eldest, and the śreṣṭha.[90] The identity between the jyeṣṭha and the śreṣṭha was established, at one level, by equating or associating the former with Indra (e.g., RV 2.16.1, SB 8.7.1.6, BSS 10.56)[91] and

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[88] Yaḥ śreṣṭhatām aśnute saḥ kilbiṣam bhavati.

[89] Śabalam tu asya mukhe jāyate.

[90] The former term meant most excellent, pre-eminent, first, chief, best, greatest (SED.:s.v.), connotations virtually identical with those associated with the śreṣṭha. "Jyeṣṭha, ordinarily meaning 'greatest', has the further specific sense of 'eldest brother' in the Ṛg Veda. It also meant the eldest amongst sons, which is another side of the same sense" (VI:s.v.).

[91] Elsewhere (SSS 4.10.1, PGS 1.5.10), he was characterised as an adhipati of jyeṣṭhas. Besides, a nakṣatra or asterism known as the jyeṣṭha was considered to be sacred to him (PGS 2.13.1).

Prajāpati (e.g., AB 4.19.3).[92] A somewhat similar identification was envisaged in the legend of Śunaḥśepa, who was appointed as a jyeṣṭha and śreṣṭha by Viśvāmitra (e.g., AB 7.33.5, SSS 15.25.1).

The emphasis on jyaiṣṭhya implied a differentiation amongst brothers in particular and kinsfolk in general, asserting the distinct status of a single man as opposed to the rest. The possibility of the jyeṣṭha possessing or being endowed with prosperity was evidently recognised as valid and justified. For instance, variations in the soma sacrifice were prescribed for the jaiṣṭhineya (the eldest son of the eldest wife) who was gataśrī, i.e., who had attained prosperity (ApSS 2.19.3). While the nature of the resources controlled by the jyeṣṭha are not specified, it is clear that, as opposed to the bhrātṛvya's or the sapatna's claims, those of the jyeṣṭha were accorded legitimacy.

The very position of the jyeṣṭha was, moreover, legitimated through the use of the anuṣṭubh metre during the soma sacrifice (PVB 8.7.3), variations in the pṛṣṭha ṣaḍaha (ibid.:12.12.4), the dvādaśāha (AB 4.19.3), the gārgatrirātra (PVB 21.2.4), the viśuvat ekāha (ApSS 22.13.21), a variation of the nāciketas (ibid.:19.14.11), the trivṛt stoma (ibid.:19.14.10), the performance of the cāturmāsyas with a five-hotṛ formula (SSS 10.16.2), and the gavām ayana (PVB 5.4.4). What is significant is that virtually all the prescribed rituals were variations on the soma sacrifice which legitimated śraiṣṭhya. In many cases, moreover, an explicit parallel was drawn between Indra's assertion of jyaiṣṭhya over the devas and that of the yajamāna over his kinsfolk.[93]

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[92] Other deities occasionally associated with jyaiṣṭhya include Mitra and Varuṇa (RV 6.67.1, 4.1.2).

[93] For instance, the dvādaśāha, allegedly used by Indra for this purpose, was accordingly recommended for the man who aspired to jyaiṣṭhya (AB 4.19.3).

Implicit in the use of such mechanisms was an understanding that jyaiṣṭhya was not naturally accorded to the first born son. On the divine plane, while Prajāpati in his capacity of creator could logically be conceived of as the first-born, Indra's association with the position was regarded as something which had to be achieved. In Śunaḥśepa's case, likewise, the position was evidently conferred (AB 7.33.5, SSS 15.25) in a sacrificial context. Śunaḥśepa's story also points to resistance to the imposition of a jyeṣṭha, which Viśvāmitra countered by banishing his recalcitrant sons. The prescription of a ritual known as the jyaiṣṭhastoma (SSS 14.31.1) for a man who belonged to a kaniṣṭha kula (literally a young, small, or subordinate family) but aspired to jyaiṣṭhya, also points to a relatively fluid position. In such a situation, what was emphasised was not so much primogeniture, but a claim to superior status on the part of any one son or kinsman to the exclusion of others. Assertions of such claims, as well as the destruction or distortion of earlier or existing networks of support necessitated a search for alternatives. Hence, attempts were made to strengthen the bonds between the śreṣṭha or jyeṣṭha and other kinsmen, especially through rituals.

Amongst the ties which were thus focused on, those with the male patrilineal ancestors, the pitṛs, were evidently the most significant, offerings to the pitṛs being prescribed as part of the soma sacrifice (e.g., BSS 8.17, SSS 8.2.13, LSS 2.10.4).[94] This was clearly a new development, unparalleled in myths. Of the divine śreṣṭhas, Indra's relations with his parents was thought

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[94] The LSS (2.5.15) goes to the extent of suggesting that the pitṛs should be associated with all the three pressings of the soma plant through the use of mantras or chants containing a reference to them. Offerings to the pitṛs were also recommended as a part of the sautrāmaṇī (BSS 17.37).

to be tension-ridden (e.g., RV 4.17.12) and while efforts were made to link him with Prajāpati in the later Vedic tradition (discussed in Section X), he was devoid of an elaborate patrilineage. Prajāpati, likewise, lacked ancestors, which was logically inevitable, given his conceptualisation as creator.[95] Nevertheless, for the human śreṣṭha, the reiteration of his patrilineal connections was considered important enough to be incorporated within the ritual.

The emphasis on patrilineal ties to the exclusion of other kinship connections invested the former with an element of sanctity. Besides, it pointed to the importance of "proper" patrilineal connections for the man who aspired to śraiṣṭhya. This implied an exclusion of those who did not have access to such connections or who may have followed alternative patterns of identification. Further, although we do not have any specific references to śreṣṭhas inheriting their father's position on the human plane,[96] such

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[95] Prajāpati did, however, have a number of sons, including Agni, Indra, Soma, and Pārameṣṭhin Prājāpatya (SB 11.1.6.14), and, as mentioned earlier, the asuras. Apart from this, virtually all created beings were regarded as his descendants. It is probably this which justified the use of his name for sacrificers whose ārṣeya was unknown (ASS 3.2.8) as well as the offering to him to ensure proper ties between father and son in the course of the rājasūya (SB 5.4.2.9). Indra was occasionally invoked as the most fatherly of fathers (pitā pitṛtamaḥ, RV 4.17.17), although he was also occasionally conceived of as a sajāta (ibid.:8.83.7) and āpi (ibid.:4.17.17) of the sacrificer. Such terms were suggestive of kinship in general and did not imply a stratification in terms of generations.

[96] For explorations of this possibility in myths, see Section X. It should be noted that although patriliny was emphasised, primogeniture was less important. Thus, although the name of the eldest son could be used in the course of the sacrifice (LSS 2.11.3), variations of the rite could be performed both by the jaiṣṭhineya (the eldest son born of the eldest wife) and the kāniṣṭhineya (the youngest son born of the youngest wife) who wished to attain prosperity. Moreover, the father-son relationship was probably not very sharply structured in terms of power and authority. This is suggested by the myth of Prajāpati and his sons (SB 8.4.1.4) where Prajāpati was conceived of as agreeing to do the bidding of his sons, whereas they, when asked to do as he says, were thought to retort, "What will we gain from it?" (Kiṁ asmākaṁ tataḥ bhaviṣyati).

possibilities would have been opened up by the recommended recollection of patrilineal ancestors.

Occasionally, the use of ritualistic genealogies was also recommended in the same context. These included the ārṣeya (SSS 5.16.5, ApSS 11.3.8) or genealogies tracing descent from Vedic seers.[97] The use of such genealogies probably demarcated the unique ritual status of the śreṣṭha vis-a-vis others.

Viewed in the context of the conflicts with bhrātṛvyas and sapatnas referred to above, the emphasis on patrilineal and ritual genealogies may have been useful in ensuring the support of kinsmen belonging to different generations as an alternative. The reiteration of such connections also reflects an attempt to ensure continuity and stability for the position of the śreṣṭha in a changing socio-political context. At the same time, the emphasis on inter-generational ties as opposed to intra-generational ones was valuable in consolidating claims to material resources--if those who could legitimately claim such resources belonged to different generations, the possibilities of conflicting claims may have been minimised. Besides, the handing down of resources from one generation to the next as opposed to the dispersal in reciprocal exchanges within the same generation, would have provided opportunities for accumulating resources which could then be converted into claims to power and authority. While these possibilities were only partly realised in the context of śraiṣṭhya, they provided, as we shall see, to some extent, the basis for the emergence of rājya.

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[97] The use of the ārṣeya was also recommended for variations in the soma sacrifice such as the dvādaśāha (BSS 16.2). Occasionally, selected deities were stated to constitute a pravara comprising of Prajāpati, the devas, Indra, Agni, the Viśvedevas, ṛṣis, and Parameṣṭhin (SB 6.2.3.10).

The śreṣṭha's role vis-a-vis kinship conflicts was broadened to encompass tensions pertaining to gender stratification as well. While this included ties amongst kinsfolk, in particular husbands and wives, they were also defined in wider terms and related ideally to all men and women. Here, once again, the roles envisaged for the divine śreṣṭhas reveal variations, with Indra engaged in battles against women and goddesses, whereas Prajāpati was associated with the more subtle process of arbitrating in favour of men. There is evidence, moreover, for the use of a variety of ritual mechanisms to ensure the establishment and perpetuation of gender stratification as well as for a certain amount of resistance to the process.

In the early Vedic tradition, Indra was assigned a leading role in myths relating to the battle of the sexes. His female opponents included sorceresses, whose heads were crushed (RV 1.133.2), Vṛtra's mother Dānu (ibid.:1.32.9), and Uṣas (ibid.:4.30.9-11), the goddess who is elsewhere (ibid.:7.79.3) described as wealthy and most Indra-like (indratamā). The devīs, probably the Heaven and Earth, conceived of as twin goddesses, were also reputedly terrorised by his might (ibid.:5.32.9). Incidentally, the Dāsas who opposed Indra were thought to use women as weapons (ibid.:5.30.9) but this evidently proved ineffective.[98] Indra's victories were

[98]The general hostility towards women embedded in Indra's characterisation is also evident from the remark (RV 8.33.17) attributed to him: "Indraḥ cit ghā tat abravīt striyaḥ aśāsyam manaḥ utoh aha kratum raghum." "Indra himself hath said, the mind of woman brooks not discipline. Her intellect hath little weight" (Griffith 1963: 423). Occasionally, analogies used in connection with Indra also indicate his association with gender stratification. For instance, the ten fingers pressing soma for Indra were regarded as patnīs or wives serving a pati or husband (RV 1.62.10). He was also compared to a pati of many women in his exploit of conquering puras (ibid.:7.26.3). However, gender roles are sometimes reversed, Indra being compared to a yoṣā (woman) who is desired by the invoker, equated with the marya or man (ibid.:4.20.5).

conceived of as due to his masculinity, paumsya (RV 10.59.3), a quality of which he was thought to deprive his opponents (e.g., RV 10.48.2, where the defeated Dasyus were supposed to have lost their manliness).

While Indra's role was more or less consistent, the fortunes of his wife underwent changes. In a hymn ascribed to her (RV 10.159.6), Śacī Paulomī claimed to control both Indra, her husband, and the jana or people at large. What is noteworthy is that she was conceived of as praising herself unlike Indra and most of the other male gods, who, more often than not, were praised by devotees.[99] If this suggests that her conceptualisation was not very popular, this is confirmed by later characterisations of Indrāṇī (whose very name is derived from Indra's) in the ritual tradition, as avidhavā (not a widow) and suputrā (having good sons, e.g., BSS 1.12, ApSS 2.5.9). Here only a few verses of the sūkta ascribed tc Śacī Paulomī, which focused on her domesticity, were selected for reiteration, to the exclusion of others. Thus, claims to dominance were replaced by relatively innocuous and hence desirable attributes of having a husband and sons.

Unlike Indra, Prajāpati was not directly associated with struggles against goddesses or women. However, he was conceived of as an arbitrator, whose role in conflicts justified the subordination of women, although not their extinction. This is evident, for instance in the myth of Śrī and the devas (SB 11.4.3.1-18). Śrī, literally fortune, being produced by Prajāpati, was luminous, bright, and trembling. The devas, attracted by her qualities, decided to kill her. Prajāpati, however, restrained them, saying that a woman

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[99] While they were occasionally conceived of as indulging in self-praise, this is relatively unusual.

ought not to be killed, although her qualities could be appropriated, The devas followed his suggestion, leaving Śrī bereft of her qualities and disconsolate. Her appeal to Prajāpati was met with the advice to perform a sacrifice, consisting of offerings to the very gods who had robbed her of her qualities. While Śrī performed the requisite sacrifice and regained these attributes, the man who aspired to acquire them was advised to make offerings to the gods rather than to Śrī (SB 11.4.3.18,19).

The conflict between Śrī and the devas centres around the control of annādya, rājya, sāmrājya, ksatra, bala, brahmavarcas, rāṣṭra, bhaga, puṣṭi, and rūpa (SB 11.4.3.3).[100] Access to such qualities was evidently acquiring importance in a situation of socio-political transformation. What the myth probably reflects is an attempt to determine the basis on which such access could be claimed. This is structured along gender lines--while women could have had an inherent or "natural" access to such attributes, this was effectively challenged, and women who desired such attributes were reduced to the position of supplicants. Moreover, men who aspired to such qualities could legitimise their claims by invoking male gods who alone could legitimately confer them.

Prajāpati was also conceived of as arbitrating in the dispute between Mind and Speech (Manas and Vāc) conceived of as masculine and feminine respectively (SB 1.4.5.8-11). Each was thought to claim superiority to the other, Mind on the ground that Speech merely imitates and follows him,[101] and Speech on the ground that she makes

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[100]The terms rājya, sāmrājya, and rāṣṭra will be discussed in Chapter IV. The other terms mean the ability to eat, power, strength priestly lustre, prosperity, nourishment, and forms respectively.

[101]She is literally anukarā and anuvartmā.

known and communicates that which Mind knows.[102] They were supposed to have taken their dispute to Prajāpati who decided in favour of Mind. In protest, Speech refused to carry oblations to Prajāpati. Thus, most offerings to Prajāpati were made silently, without the use of mantras (ibid.:1.4.5.12). In this case, the relative positions of the genders was regarded as determined by Prajāpati's judgment.[103]

The norms of heterosexual relationships were also implicitly and occasionally explicitly justified by being associated with Prajāpati, who was described as giving away his daughter Sūryā or Sāvitrī to Soma rājā in marriage (AB 4.17.1).[104] This marriage was evidently regarded as a model, which was, as we shall see (Chapter VIII) reiterated in legends and rituals. Elsewhere (BAU 6.4.2), Prajāpati was envisaged as creating women as receptacles for retas (sperm), laying down the rules for heterosexual intercourse in the same context. These were based on the assumption that the process could benefit only one of the participants, and sought to ensure the control or dominance of the male partner.

It is evident that the association of Prajāpati with specific elements of gender stratification implied a widening of the definition of śraiṣṭhya. While Indra was conceived of as fighting and defeating

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[102] Yat vai tvaṁ vettha ahaṁ tat vijñapayāmi, ahaṁ saṁjñapayāmi iti.

[103] Vāc was in fact the only goddess who was thought to have acquired śraiṣṭhya (SSS 15.11.1) on account of her control over the speech of all beings. However, she was more often than not typified as a frivolous woman and was not held up as an ideal for either men or women.

[104] As we shall see (Chapter VIII), other forms of marriage were recognised. However, the gift of a daughter by the father, implying the total control of the patriarch, emerged as the ideal pattern.

individual women, the regulations ascribed to Prajāpati were thought of as being universal, relevant to all women and men. These notions were frequently reiterated through rituals.

On the human plane, rituals for acquiring śraiṣṭhya such as the soma sacrifice were also regarded as a means of ensuring the general subordination of women. This was achieved by denying certain ritual possibilities while enforcing others. For instance, the offering of the pātnīvat cups (i.e., the offering of soma to the devas along with their wives) could not be made with a particular formula known as the puroruc (SB 4.4.2.11), as this formula was symbolic of vīrya or valour, which would then be conferred on both the divine and the human women, obviously a disastrous possibility from the point of view of the ritual authorities. In the same context, both categories of wives were symbolically emasculated (nirakṣṇoti) through the use of the vajra, Indra's characteristic weapon, and reduced to eunuchs (niraṣṭā), and were consequently denied both selfhood and inheritance (ātman and dāya respectively, ibid.:4.4.2.13). At the same time, vīrya was conferred on the puṁsa or male (ibid.:4.4.2.14).[105] The submissiveness of women was also achieved by reciting the verses meant for the wives in a low voice to ensure that the human wife was aprativādinī, i.e., did not retort or protest (AB 3.12.13). An ideal polygynous situation was also created by invoking a single male deity before a group of females to ensure that one man had many wives but not vice versa (AB 3.15.3). Besides, as noted earlier (Section IV), the procreative powers of women were symbolically appropriated in the course of the sacrifice.

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[105] In the course of the sautrāmaṇī, which also legitimised śraiṣṭhya, the use of woollen thread, spun by women, was considered to be a means of appropriating the indriya and vīrya which was extinct in them (SB 12.7.2.11).

Occasionally, provision was made for giving away the daughter of the yajamāna as part of the dakṣiṇā for the sacrifice (ASS 5.3.17).[106] This implied an assertion of the total control of the sacrificer over his daughter. It would have also suggested a parallel to Prajāpati's gift of his daughter and implied an extension of the instrumentality associated with women, evident in the procreative symbolism of the ritual, referred to earlier (Section IV). In this case, the daughter could be used as an instrument to cement the ties between the sacrificer and his priest.

At another level, the dīkṣā or initiation which prepared the sacrificer for the occasion marked an attempt to recreate the process of childbirth in the ritual context. This was done through the development of an elaborate analogy between the objects used in the sacrifice and the organs involved in the physical process--for instance, the hut in which the sacrificer was placed was regarded as a yoni or womb (AB 1.1.3). The consequent "rebirth" of the sacrificer was viewed as a means of equipping him for participation, duly sanctified, in the realm of the sacred. This implied a denial of the importance of physical processes, examples of which have been noted in the context of creation myths (Section III). Such tendencies sharpened gender stratification partly by denying women access to the more socially or ritually desirable form of birth or rebirth, and partly by belittling the importance of the physical process in which their role was one of undeniable significance.

There are, at the same time, indications that attempts to use the sacrifice as an occasion for defining gender-based relationships met with some resistance. This is suggested by the myth of Aditi

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[106] Nārāyaṇa, the commentator on the text, regards this as a daiva form of marriage.

and the soma sacrifice. The devas were conceived of as excluding her from a share in the sacrifice (SB 3.2.3.1). She "confused" them to get even, as a result of which they were unable to perform the ritual, until they compromised and agreed to grant her a share.[107]

In other instance, those who opposed the soma sacrifice were characterised as rākṣasīs or asurīs of whom Dīrghajihvī (literally the long-tongued one) was an outstanding example. She was credited as being the destroyer of the sacrifice (yajñahā), defiling the sacrificial soma by licking it (PVB 13.6.9, AB 2.8.4). Her fate, unlike Aditi's, was grim--she was killed by Indra with the help of a handsome young man, Sumitra.

It is significant that, unlike the yajamāna-bhrātṛvya struggle, the imposition of gender stratification in the process of acquiring or legitimising śraiṣṭhya was not regarded as ambiguous. Moreover, ritual alternatives, such as were envisaged for the viś, were not available to women who may have opposed the process. This is to an extent understandable, given the fact that the brahmanical tradition was by and large male dominated. It is also likely that just as inter-generational ties amongst kinsmen were emerging as a source of support for the śreṣṭha, so also, the support of men as opposed to women, ensured by emphasising the differences between the two and placing the latter under the control of the former, was valuable for the śreṣṭha in a situation of growing social stratification.

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[107] In another version (AB 1.2.1) the sacrifice was thought to have disappeared and was regained through Aditi's assistance. In the case of another goddess, Manotā, her share of the soma sacrifice was assigned to Agni (ibid.:2.6.10), although in an alternative tradition (ApSS 7.24.1), the original offering continued to be recommended. Such variations point to the difficulties in imposing a single, consistent norm.

IX

The roles envisaged for the śreṣṭha in socio-political conflicts presupposed the existence or development of mechanisms which enabled him to perform these effectively. These mechanisms included devices to acquire the resources necessary to maintain networks of coercion and communication, as well as specific institutions for the latter two purposes.

There is evidence to suggest that the śreṣṭha participated directly in a number of exchanges, some of which were embedded in the ritual context. While such direct participation may have ensured access to resources, it also meant that the spatial dimension of the economic network would have been limited. Nevertheless, the emergence of such directional exchanges laid the basis for future developments.

The resources which the śreṣṭha acquired through such exchanges are referred to as bali and uddhāra. The former term was used to indicate a range of meanings--including an offering to the gods, tribute paid by hostile people, or tribute offered by the people in general (Basu 1925:62). The offering of bali to the gods was implicitly meant to placate them and to ensure their benevolence (Gonda 1969:11) and by extension, bali offered to the śreṣṭha was probably viewed as a means of winning his favour. The use of an identical term in both contexts underscored the dependent status of the giver of bali vis-a-vis its recipient[108] but may at the same time have implied some obligations on the part of the donor.

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[108] This corresponds with what Gregory (1982:52) characterises as an intra-clan exchange, where donors are viewed as subordinate to recipients.

There are indications that bali may have included food. This is suggested by the use of the verb upaharati in the context of offering bali, which normally signifies the apportioning or serving of food (Gonda 1969:12). Besides, the offering of anna to the śreṣṭha as a form of bali is referred to in the course of an analogy (PVB 15.7.3-4)[109] suggesting that this was a common practice.

The receiving of food as a form of bali ties in with the emphasis on annādya or the ability to eat referred to earlier (Section IV). It is likely that the giving and receiving of food, implying an access to hospitality, widened and strengthened the social ties between the śreṣṭha and those who offered bali. Hence, while the material resources acquired as bali were not substantial in tangible terms, an ability to demand and claim it effectively came to be regarded as the hallmark of any successful ruler.[110]

While attempts were made to specify the recipients of bali the donors of bali are by and large unspecified in the context

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[109] Prajāpatim vā etena ahnā (the tenth day of the dvādaśāha) parivevişati. Tat na vyavavadyam, yat vai śreṣṭhe parivişyamāṇaḥ vadati annādyasya saḥ avagrahaḥ, tasmāt na vyavavadyam annādyasya anavagrahāya. Tat u vyavavadyam, yathā śreṣṭhāya balim hriyamāṇam panthānam paryanuvedayati gatyai tathā tat (PVB 15.7.3,4). Caland 1931:410-411) translates as follows: "They offer this day as food to Prajāpati; therefore, no revealing must be made. The blame they utter whilst a person of high rank is being served with food, is an impediment. Therefore, no revealing must be made: in order not to injure the food. It must, however, be revealed: just as if he were to send round the food that is being brought on behalf of a person of high rank for his voyage, in order that he may go (on his voyage) so (it) is (with) this."

[110] This is reflected, for instance, in the Rāmāyaṇa, where bali is virtually the only term signifying tax (Brockington 1984:63). Given the role of the epic in communicating with a non-specialist audience, the choice of terminology acquires significance.

of śraiṣṭhya.[111] This lack of specificity was probably useful in widening claims and incorporating as many social categories as possible within the appropriative network.

The uddhāra or special share was evidently claimed by the śreṣṭha in return for services rendered. In one episode (AB 3.12.10) Indra was conceived of as demanding and receiving an uddhāra from the devas after killing Vṛtra and becoming Mahendra (literally the great Indra). He was also thought to receive an uddhāra due to the śreṣṭha (śreṣṭhasya uddhāra) in the soma sacrifice in recognition of his role as a destroyer of the sapatna (sapatnaghna, SB 3.9.4.9). On the human plane, there is an incidental reference to the viś giving an uddhāra to the kṣatra in order to please the latter (ibid.:9.1.1.15).

The components of uddhāra are not specified. However, the demand may have occasionally been oppressive. Indra, for instance, was conceived of as demanding everything from the devas as his uddhāra (AB 3.12.10), although he later relented when his wife interceded on behalf of the devas. This indicates the fluid nature of such exactions, the objects and quantities realised in any given instance probably depending on the relative strength of those involved in the exchange. Besides, there are no indications regarding the regularity of the demands of either bali or uddhara, the absence of such specifications probably reflecting a situation in which regular, systematic appropriation was difficult.

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[111] There is one reference (SB 1.8.2.17) to performing a variation of the new and full moon sacrifice to ensure that the bhrātṛvya offered bali to the sacrificer. However, such prescriptions, associating bali with a special social category, are rather rare.

That there were problems in establishing claims to productive resources or produce is also suggested by the nature of the kṣatra-viś relationship, reflected in rituals. As we have seen, while the desirability of a hierarchical order was recognised by those who aspired to dominance, the difficulties in enforcing this were evident. It is in this context that the relatively undeveloped nature of mechanisms of coercion, and, to a lesser extent, communication, associated with the śreṣṭha have to be viewed.

The use of coercion to assert and maintain śraiṣṭhya is evident from myths as well as from incidental references to the human situation. In one instance (PVB 14.5.15), all bhūtas or creatures except a certain sage were conceived of as praising Indra. This was obviously unacceptable, so Indra decided to make the sage fall in line by depriving him of water. Faced with this situation, the sage had no option but to conciliate the angry god by praising him through the Śārkara sāman. In an almost identical fashion, Prajāpati was conceived of as seizing the breath of his prajā (ibid.: 7.5.2), when they attempted to go away from him, compelling them to accept his śraiṣṭhya. This is one of the rare instances in which the divine śreṣṭhas were envisaged as adopting more or less similar approaches to problems--depriving their opponents of basic necessities.

A similar ability to exercise control is apparent on the human plane, where, if a man attained śraiṣṭhya, people were thought to do as he said (AB 2.7.5). However, there are no indications regarding the exact means of coercion employed on the human plane. As we have seen (Section IV), the human śreṣṭha did not have absolute or sole control over basic necessities, and in such a situation, the

means associated with Indra or Prajāpati would not have been available to him. Hence, while the myths may reflect the aspirations of the human śreṣṭha, the possibilities open to him in practice were distinctly different.

These differences are sharpened when we turn to the socio-political conflicts in which the śreṣṭha intervened. As we have seen, the role of the divine śreṣṭhas vis-a-vis such issues was envisaged as markedly different, with Indra being regarded as an active, and often violent participant, whereas Prajāpati's role was conceived as that of an arbitrator. Moreover, Indra's role in kinship and gender-related issues was viewed as more crucial than his role vis-a-vis the varṇa hierarchy. Prajāpati, on the other hand, was envisaged as playing a determining role in the latter, and in ensuring gender stratification. As noted earlier, rituals associated with legitimising śraiṣṭhya point to closer parallels to the roles envisaged for Indra than with those of Prajāpati.

Despite these similarities, the differences between Indra and his human counterpart are evident when we compare the mechanis attributed to them for the attainment of their objectives. Indra was conceived of as armed with the equipment of a warrior, typifie by the vajra or thunderbolt[112] and stones or rocks,[113] both of which are used effectively in his fight against Vṛtra. More generally, he is described as śakra or mighty (e.g., RV 8.97.4),

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[112]The epithet vajrahasta(he who has a thunderbolt in his hand) is used over fifty times with reference to Indra in the Rg Veda, while vajrin (he who bears the thunderbolt) occurs over a hundred times (Choudhuri 1981:4).

[113]Indra is characterised as adrivat (possessed of stones) in more than fifty places in the Rg Veda (Choudhuri 1981:4)

as endowed with kṣatra (PVB 9.2.7, SB 2.5.4.8) and vīrya (PVB 9.7.5, SB 12.7.2.16), and is often described as śatakratu (e.g., RV 2.22.4), i.e., possessed of a hundred powers.[114] To an extent, the exercise of these qualities was legitimised on the human plane where these were recognised amongst the attributes which were "acquired" through the soma sacrifice.[115]

However, as noted earlier, on the human plane, the Indra-Vṛtra struggle was frequently equated with that between the yajamāna and his bhrātṛvya or sapatna. What is significant in the present context is that unlike Indra, the yajamāna was not expected to destroy his enemy by demonstrations of valour, but had to employ ritual symbolism instead. This was probably owing to the fact that the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna was within the social unit in which the śreṣṭha operated, hence, his total extermination was not regarded as desirable or possible. As a result, the option of overt violence was eschewed in favour of an assertion of dominance in the ritual context.[116] A similar shift is discernible with reference to gender stratification, where, once again, Indra's explicit acts of aggression were replaced by ritual manipulations.

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[114] According to Gonda (1959:37): "It (i.e., the term śatakratu) may rather vaguely be described as a kind of effective mental power or intelligence, mental energy and determination, which enables its possessor to have a solution for a practical difficulty."

[115] These included vīrya (PVB 4.5.21, AB 1.1.5), ojas (strength) and indriya (prowess, AB 1.1.5).

[116] It is also important to bear in mind that an exclusive dependence on military control had its limits in ancient (Mann 1986:26) as in most modern societies. While overt force can ensure a measure of temporary control, its maintenance on a long-term basis often runs into problems. As opposed to this, the exercise of power through ideology is often more effective and enduring, even if its initial manifestation is less dramatic.

There was, besides, another dimension of the Indra-Vṛtra struggle which was not extended on to the human plane. In many versions of the myth, in both the early and the later Vedic context, Indra was conceived of as destroying Vṛtra with the assistance of the Maruts, so much so that Marutvat is one of the common epithets of the deity. Their support was occasionally rewarded with a bhāga or share of the soma sacrifice (AB 3.12.9)[117] and they were recognised as sacivas, i.e., friends or companions[118] of the god.

Nevertheless, the relationship between Indra and the Maruts was often viewed as less than harmonious, especially in the later Vedic tradition. On one occasion (RV 1.165.6,8) they were derided for their eagerness to accompany Indra to the sacrifice, while they did not join him in the battle field.[119] Besides, as mentioned above (Section VI), the Indra-Maruts relationship was frequently equated with the kṣatra-viś bond which was evidently under strain owing to a divergence of interests.[120]

The transformation of the Indra-Maruts relationship in the context of the Indra-Vṛtra struggle probably reflects one of the fundamental tensions of contemporary society. As long as Vṛtra epitomised the outsider--whether a hostile natural force or a hostile human enemy--a more or less unified body was prepared to

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[117] In this context the term retains its earlier meaning of a share to be distributed, as opposed to the later meaning of a tax.

[118] The term means companion, friend, especially a king's friend, or attendant, counsellor or minister (SED:s.v.). Basak (1925:523) also corroborates that it initially meant associate or companion. The term is amongst those most commonly used to designate court officials in the earliest stage of the Rāmāyaṇa (Brockington 1984:131).

[119] They are described as Indra's samānas in this context (RV 1.165.7).

[120] Other ramifications of the Maruts-viś equation are discussed in Chapter VII.

oppose and vanquish him. When, however, the enemy was viewed as existing within society, a unified response was no longer possible, as the enemy from one social perspective could turn out to be a friend from another. In such a situation, the lack of references to the supporters of the śreṣṭha on the human plane is understandable.

In this context, the intervention of the human śreṣṭha in socio-political conflicts would have been important as a means of ensuring support from those whose cause or aspirations were upheld by the śreṣṭha. The sacrifice, providing an occasion for reiterating and legitimising such claims, was thus, at the same time, a crucial mechanism whereby the human śreṣṭha fulfilled his roles and communicated information regarding them. It is significant that there are virtually no references to other means of communication apart from the sacrificial context in connection with śraiṣṭhya. It is in this situation that attempts to legitimise the position of the śreṣṭha acquire significance.

The problem of the "acquisition" or the legitimate transfer of śraiṣṭhya was discussed in myths. Some of these myths attempted to connect the two divine śreṣṭhas, Indra and Prajāpati. The latter was regarded as the initial śreṣṭha who indicated his position by donning a wreath (sraja, PVB 16.4.1-3). He then conferred the wreath on Indra, who was consequently accepted as the śreṣṭha by the rest of the prajā. The myth reflects the tendency to coalesce the distinctive attributes of Prajāpati and Indra. As suggested earlier, this may have been a means of uniting the followers of distinct beliefs, integrating diverse possibilities of social action. Besides, the envisaged transfer of śraiṣṭhya from father t(son would have legitimised the association of śraiṣṭhya with patril referred to earlier.[121]

In another myth (SB 8.3.1.3), the devas were thought to have conferred śraiṣṭhya on Indra and Agni in return for services rendered.[122] This suggests an implicit contract, which, however, had no parallel on the human plane. The absence of such parallels indicates a denial of the legitimacy of popular control over the process of conferring śraiṣṭhya.

The ability to perform a sacrifice was recognised as a means of attaining śraiṣṭhya in a myth where the devas were conceived of as engaged in a sattra (SB 14.1.1.4), agreeing that he who finishe(

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[121] Nevertheless, the mythical transfer was not viewed as aut matic, requiring, as it did, the acknowledgement of the prajā. Besides, it did not imply primogeniture.

[122] Here, the devas are depicted as being unable to lay down bricks required for the sacrificial altar. Indra and Agni were requested to help. They wanted to know what they would gain in return, and were informed that they would be recognised as śreṣṭha

first would be acknowledged as a śreṣṭha. Viṣṇu, identified with Āditya, was thought to have acquired śraiṣṭhya in this context (ibid.:14.1.1.5-6). This association was the one most commonly reiterated in the explicitly human situation.[123]

While both Indra and Prajāpati were closely associated with the sacrifice, there was a fundamental difference in the nature of the connection. Indra was occasionally characterised as the protector[124] and enjoyer of the sacrifice including the soma sacrifice in particular (PVB 9.4.15, AB 2.8.5). Besides, he was regarded as the deity of the sacrifice in general (yajñasya devatā, AB 5.25.9, SB 1.4.1.33), emerging as its patron.[125] Prajāpati, on the other hand, was totally identified with the yajña (PVB 7.2.1, AB 2.7.7, SB 6.4.1.6, BAU 3.9.6 etc.). In the ritual context, both these possibilities were envisaged for the yajamāna who was identified with Indra (e.g., SB 2.6.4.8) or Prajāpati (e.g., AB 2.7.8). Such identifications, apart from explicitly ascribing divinity to the yajamāna, were important in terms of indicating control over sacred activities.

The basic soma sacrifice or agniṣṭoma (literally hymns in praise of Agni) was, as we have seen, recognised as the means of legitimating claims to śraiṣṭhya (PVB 6.3.9, AB 1.1.5 etc.). The

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[123] Other recommended means of acquiring śraiṣṭhya included knowledge of myths (e.g., PVB 7.5.3) or mystical insight (e.g., BAU 6.1.1) or of the yajus and sāmans (ibid.:5.13.2,3). While such "means" did not have immediate social or political relevance, they indicate the importance of śraiṣṭhya as an ideal, as it was extended to express the highest conceivable attainment in a range of contexts.

[124] For instance, he was thought to protect the sacrifice from Dīrghajihvī (PVB 13.6.9) as well as from rakṣas (ibid.:14.12.7, SB 1.4.5.3), and asuras (AB 2.7.6).

[125] In one instance (SB 1.2.4.1,2), the major sacrificial tools, the wooden sword and the sacrificial post, were regarded as parts of the vajra with which Indra killed Vṛtra.

sacrifice was fairly simple, lasting for three days and involving the slaughter of a single animal (Drury 1981:25). Despite its relatively unostentatious character, the sacrifice was recognised as prestigious,[126] probably owing to its antiquity (Eggeling 1963a:xv).

While the use of soma for sacrificial purposes was an integral part of the early Vedic tradition, there are indications that the soma sacrifice as prescribed in the later Vedic tradition was the outcome of several modifications and elaborations. Not surprisingly these were associated with the divine śreṣṭhas. For instance, the performance of the agniṣṭoma was recommended as this was described as the means whereby Prajāpati acquired śraiṣṭhya (PVB 6.3.9).[127] This was clearly a new development, connecting a deity who was virtually unknown in the Rg Veda to a popular ritual.

Indra's association with the ritual as it evolved was also the subject of some discussion. This is evident from the speculation on the number of potsherds to be used in the ritual, which was resolved in favour of the number eleven, symbolic of Indra (AB 2.8.5).[128] The paucity of verses addressed to Indra amongst those employed in the ritual was also remarked upon (ibid.:6.28.2),

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[126] This is evident, for instance, in the notion that all other sacrifices were merged in it (AB 3.14.1).

[127] This was in fact explicitly regarded as the means whereby Prajāpati asserted his śraiṣṭhya over his prajā (PVB 6.3.9).

[128] Of the alternative numbers, eight and twelve, the first was symbolic of the gāyatrī metre, brahma, and Agni, and the second of the jagatī metre, viś and Viśvedevas. The chosen number, eleven, represented the triṣṭubh metre, kṣatra, and Indra.

given his supposed association with the sacrifice, and a way out was found by suggesting an implicit connection. This was established by stating that any verse containing the words "drink" or "protect" was in reality symbolic of and addressed to Indra. Thus, a deliberate attempt was made to connect the deity with the ritual.[129]

The soma sacrifice, as we have seen, provided an important occasion for ceremonial exchanges and for communicating values of socio-political significance, relating to the varṇa hierarchy, bonds amongst kinsmen, and gender stratification. The weaving together of these concerns, and specific perspectives regarding them, were sanctified through their reiteration in the context of what was, initially at least, a popular ritual. Nevertheless, the very element of popular participation, though valuable from the perspective of communication, became problematic when attempts were made to utilise the occasion to disseminate messages of socio-political differentiation and to enforce or legitimise such differences.

It was in this context that variations in the soma sacrifice were recommended as a means of attaining śraiṣṭhya. Generally, the variations lengthened the duration of the sacrifice, during which more complex combinations of chants and rituals were used. Besides, they were associated with larger quantities of dakṣiṇā. Such variations included the gārgatrirātra (PVB 21.2.4), the

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129 That such modifications were not very easily achieved is evident from the fact that the obvious expedient of incorporating verses referring directly to Indra was not adopted. Besides, the Viśvedevas preceded Indra in the order in which the offerings were made in the course of the animal sacrifice associated with the ritual. As Eggeling (1963a:xix)remarks: "We have probably to assume that this order was too firmly established by long usage to have been easily altered."

dvādaśāha (AB 4.19.3)[130] the udbhit (BSS 18.31), the navarātra (ASS 10.3.22), the viśvajit-agniṣṭoma (ApSS 22.1.6), and the vācastoma (SSS 15.11.8).[131]

The tendency to use a more complicated ritual had a number of implications. It would have narrowed down the number of claimants to śraiṣṭhya, as only those who had access to additional resources would have been able to perform it. It would also have implied a greater dependence on priestly expertise.[132] Besides, popular participation may have been effectively restricted, as commoners may have found it difficult to be present continuously during long-drawn rituals. As such, they would have lost control over the communication process associated with such rituals and would have been increasingly thrust into the receiving end, having roles assigned to them rather than participating on their own terms. What would have been communicated through such complex rituals was thus a clearer message of dominance and subordination.[133]

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[130] This was also a means of acquiring ādhipatya (BSS 18.19).

[131] Some of these rites such as the vācastoma were regarded as a means of acquiring svārājya and ādhipatya as well. Similarly the sarvamedha (SB 13.7.1.1, SSS 16.15.1) was prescribed for the acquisition of śraiṣṭhya amongst other things. Occasionally, the sautrāmaṇī, which was, in many respects, a substitute soma sacrifice was associated with the acquisition of śraiṣṭhya (SB 12.8.2.28).

[132] In fact, the very codification of the sacrificial cult, reflected in the brahmanical texts, emphasising a single 'proper' method of performing rituals, would have strengthened priestly control over the sacrifice.

[133] The use of the sacrifice thus envisaged constitutes an example of the immanent role of ideology, "grappling intellectually, morally and aesthetically with given power relations, and, in its

The position of the śreṣṭha thus developed in relation to a situation of social differentiation, reflected in attempts to widen the scope of his power and authority from the limited definition in terms of more or less equal groups to a vaguer definition which was potentially all-encompassing. As we have seen, the relationship of the śreṣṭha to material resources also incorporated a similar range of possibilities. In a sense, the association of both Indra and Prajāpati, each endowed with distinctive features, with the same position, was symbolic of the process of expanding the definition of śraiṣṭhya. As suggested earlier, Indra and Prajāpati were in all likelihood associated with different traditions, which were deliberately fused to create a unified belief system.

While efforts to identify specific elements of the unified tradition with one or the other strand can be problematic, certain shifts in beliefs provide an indication of processes related to its emergence. The shifts which were significant include a growing emphasis on defining the varṇa hierarchy, defining relationships amongst kinsmen, and systematic efforts to enforce gender stratification. As we have seen, discussions on these themes reveal departures from or modifications of the perspectives reflected in the early Vedic tradition, and, in the case of varṇa, a virtually new development.

Perhaps the most striking example of the process is the reconceptualisation of the Indra-Vṛtra myth, whereby an enemy who was earlier recognised as an embodiment of unqualified evil was transformed into a potentially positive force, whose qualities had to be appropriated. If one views the Indra-Vṛtra struggle as reflected in the early Vedic tradition as one between those regarded

as insiders and outsiders, then the shift in later Vedic mythology may reflect a blurring of such distinctions and a tendency to amalgamate different social groups.

Such a process of amalgamation would have necessarily been complex, and would have involved changes in the social organisation of previously opposed groups, evident in the rehabilitation of Vṛtra. It would have also sharpened social stratification, whether structured along varṇa, kinship or gender lines, as issues of relative social status tend to acquire greater significance in such situations, where the norms and practices of one social group may present an implicit or explicit challenge to the others. It is in this context that the śreṣṭha emerged, claiming an ability to define social norms, attempting to enforce such definitions by asserting control over possibly the most prestigious networks of exchange, and through rituals such as the soma sacrifice, which provided an occasion for communicating such definitions.

However, the difficulties inherent in arriving at or enforcing any single set of norms, evident in ritual variations and in myths, indicates that the emergence of śraiṣṭhya did not resolve or contain the social tensions or conflicts which prevailed. As we shall see, other attempts were made to grapple with the situation. These were characterised by a variety of different approaches towards the issues which were assuming centrality. Simultaneously, the specific nature and relative importance of such issues also underwent changes. In the next chapter, we will examine some of the more important alternatives and their significance.

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CHAPTER THREE

ASSIMILATION, MARGINALISATION, ADAPTATION: TOWARDS A COMPOSITE IDEAL

> The kṣatriya anointed with the aindra-mahābhiṣeka wins all victories, finds all worlds, attains śraiṣṭhya, atiṣṭhā, paramatā over all rājās and having won sāmrājya, bhaujya, svārājya, vairājya, pārameṣṭhya, rājya, māhārajya and ādhipatya...becomes immortal.
>
> Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

I

The exploration of alternative concepts of political power, each fairly distinct, was a unique feature of the later Vedic tradition, contrasting both with the early Vedic phase in which problems of definition were probably unimportant, and the post-Vedic brahmanical tradition, dominated by a single definition of legitimate power and authority in terms of rājya. The attempt to define such alternatives is therefore historically significant, as it reflects both the fluidity and tension characteristic of a situation of transition.

The discussion on these institutions within the tradition ranges from cursory references to more detailed analyses. This in itself indicates that all of these possibilities were not regarded as equally important. Besides, as we shall see, the extent to which attempts were made to incorporate such possibilities within the definition of rājya also reveals significant variations. As will be evident, both the elements which were included as well as those which were excluded are useful in focusing attention on political processes related to the emergence of rājya. With

this in view, we will examine three of the most important alternatives, viz., ādhipatya, vairājya, and svārājya.[1]

While the sources of information available are broadly simila to those referred to in the discussion on śraiṣṭhya, there are certain important variations. On the mythical plane, ādhipatya, vairājya, and svārājya were associated with a variety of deities, including goddesses. For instance, vairājya was associated with Indra (SSS 8.17.2), Agni (ApSS 5.15.2), Sarasvat (ibid.:5.11.6), Mitra (SSS 14.30.1), Soma (SB 3.3.2.17), Aditi (ibid.:2.2.1.20), Vāc (ibid.:3.5.1.34), and Śrī (ibid.:11.4.3.18), while svārājya was an occasional attribute of Indra (RV 3.45.5, BSS 13.28, SSS 14.26.1), Varuṇa (SSS 14.30.1), Agni (SB 7.5.1.31, ApSS 5.15.2 Vāc (SSS 15.11.1), Soma (ApSS 20.15.5), the Rudras (SSS 17.6.2), Prajāpati (PVB 19.13.3), Savitṛ (RV 5.82.2), and the Maruts (ibid.:5.58.1).[2] Although none of these deities was associated exclusively or even predominantly with either vairājya or svārājya, the attribution of these positions to a range of distinct deities indicates their importance. At the same time, it also renders the task of delineating the characteristics typical of each position more difficult than (in the case of the śreṣṭha or the rājā.

The problem is, if possible, further complicated by the frequent association of ādhipatya with Agni (e.g., PVB 6.7.2-3, AB 3.14.4, SB 9.3.3.11). While Agni was one of the few gods who

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[1]While these are by no means the only terms which figure i the tradition (see for instance AB 8.39.5 cited above), they are relatively more important than the others.

[2]For details of deities associated with ādhipatya, see Sections II-IV.

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retained a position of importance in the early Vedic (Griswold 1971:87) as well as in the later Vedic tradition,[3] he was not only an adhipati, being associated with other positions of status as well.[4] He was, moreover, regarded as the archetypal divine priest or hotṛ (e.g., RV 5.1.7, PVB 24.13.5, AB 1.5.2, SB 1.3.3.13). Hence his attributes may reflect those expected of the human priest as much as, if not more than, those associated with the adhipati. It is in this context that incidental references to the conduct or activities of human adhipatis assume significance, enabling us to distinguish between the attributes of Agni which were specific to ādhipatya and others.

The evidence from rituals meant to legitimate such positions is also uneven--while a number of sacrifices were associated with the acquisition of ādhipatya amongst other things, virtually no sacrifices were prescribed for the attainment of vairājya. We will argue that the extent of ritualisation was probably related to specific features associated with such positions.

Where sacrifices were prescribed, these included variations of the soma sacrifice (e.g., the ṛṣabha ekāha and the pṛṣṭha ṣaḍaha for ādhipatya, PVB 19.12.3, 13.9.23) and sattras (e.g., PVB 23.14.3). While the implications of variations in the soma sacrifice have

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[3] Pandey (1969:36) focuses on the association of Agni with virtually every saṁskāra. Besides, "at various levels, the light, the fire, the interior warmth express everywhere spiritual experiences, the sphere of the sacred, the divine proximity" (Aguilar 1976:113).

[4] For instance, he was described as a rājā (e.g., RV 6.4.4, SB 2.3.4.29), samrāj (RV 3.55.7, PVB 1.4.2, SB 2.4.1.8, ApSS 6.2.1), svarāj (SB 7.5.1.31), viśpati (RV 2.1.8), nṛpati (RV 2.1.1), virāj (ApSS 5.15.2), and śreṣṭha (RV 1.161.1, BSS 26.33, ApSS 5.24.4).

been referred to earlier (Chapter II), the use of sattras in which all participants were supposed to possess a similar status, and from which everyone was expected to benefit equally, opened up certain new possibilities, which we will explore.

In the case of the virāj, we will supplement the information available from the sources referred to earlier with an examination of the virāj metre and its attributes. The fact that an identical term was used for both the metre and a position of importance in the ritual context where specificity and accuracy were highly valued and recognised as essential for ensuring success, suggests that the connotations of the term in both contexts was more or less similar.[5]

As in the case of the śreṣṭha, there are virtually no references to specific human adhipatis, virājs or svarājs--the only human virājs mentioned being the semi-mythical rulers of the Uttara Madras and Uttara Kurus, supposedly ruling to the north of the Himalayas (AB 8.38.3). As suggested earlier, the absence of references to specific incumbents is in itself important, pointing as it does to a reluctance to preserve the memory of such men (and possibly women). Nevertheless, the fact that some of the sacrifices such as the rājasūya and the aindramahābhiṣeka which legitimated rājya were, at the same time, viewed as a means of "acquiring" the attributes associated with these positions,[6] indicates an effort to

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[5] "Since the name and the thing named are in so-called primitive and archaic thought much more intimately associated than modern men are accustomed to accept, identity of names was widely considered to point to identity of essence" (Gonda 1984:60).

[6] For instance, the rājasūya was regarded as a means whereby Varuṇa, the first performer of the sacrifice, acquired śraiṣṭhya, svārājya, and ādhipatya (SSS 15.12.1).

widen the definition of rājya so as to encompass a range of possibilities. It is in this context that an understanding of these terms acquires relevance. With this in view, we will explore the significance of ādhipatya in terms of the spheres of influence (Section II), the association with material resources (Section III), and the social roles and means of implementing these (Section IV). This will be followed by a discussion on the nature of vairājya (Section V) and svārājya (Section VI).

II

The term adhipati is frequently interpreted as ruler, lord, king, sovereign (e.g., SED:s.v., PSED:s.v.).[7] While such interpretations suggest a certain commonality between ādhipatya and other forms of power and authority, the institution was, at the same time, associated with distinct attributes.

Definitions of ādhipatya on both the divine and the human plane incorporated a range of categories or spheres over which the adhipati (and occasionally, on the divine plane, the adhipatnī) was expected to exercise control or influence. This presents a contrast to the definition of śraiṣṭhya which envisaged the exploration of two possibilities--of the śreṣṭha as the leader of those who were more or less similar to him and of a vaguer, potentially all-encompassing definition. The position of the adhipati was, as we shall see, somewhere in between these two extremes--including control over categories with which the adhipati was intrinsically connected, and extending to other categories. However, it was rarely articulated in terms of the comprehensiveness associated with Prajāpati in the context of śraiṣṭhya.

The first possibility was worked out through mythical references as well as through incidental references to the human situation. On the divine plane, Sūrya or the sun was regarded as the adhipati of the viśvajyotis ("all-light") bricks used in the agnicayana[8] (SB 8.7.1.22), and Indra of the devas (ApSS 14.3.5). In each

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[7] In medical terminology adhipati refers to the part of the head where a wound proves instantly fatal (SED:s.v., PSED:s.v.). While this is a technical usage of the term, its association with a position of vital importance is significant.

[8] Likewise, in the gṛhya rituals, the sarpa or serpent is referred to as sarpānām adhipati (AGS 2.1.10, PGS 2.14.9).

of these cases there is a common substratum linking the deity with the categories over whom he was conceived of as exercising ādhipatya. This notion was reiterated on the human plane, where the adhipati, like the śreṣṭha, was occasionally defined in terms of samānas or equals (PVB 6.2.9, BSS 18.43) and in terms of manuṣyas or men in general (PVB 19.12.3, ApSS 14.3.5).[9]

Another relationship envisaged was characterised not by an identity between the adhipati and those over whom he exercised control, but by the dependence and subordination of the latter vis-a-vis the former. On the mythical plane, this possibility is exemplified in the notion of Prajāpati as the adhipati of prajā (SB 8.4.3.3), Brahmaṇaspati as the adhipati of brahma (varna) (ibid.:8.4.3.4), and Bhūtānāmpati as the adhipati of bhūtas or creatures (ibid.:8.4.3.5).[10]

This element is evident in incidental references to the human situation as well, with puruṣa or man being conceived of as the adhipati of paśus (PVB 6.2.7), being distinguished by their different methods of eating--men eat with their heads erect, while animals eat with their heads bent down (ibid.:6.2.8-9). Elsewhere (AB 7.34.2), ādhipatya was defined as the control exercised by the kṣatriya over prajā.

Occasionally, especially in the human situation, attempts were made to fuse or equate these inherently contradictory definitions in terms of similar and subordinate groups, the adhipati

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[9] In this context a prayer was offered to Indra as the adhipati of the devas to make the sacrificer an adhipati amongst manuṣyas. A prayer could also be offered to attain ādhipatya over prajā (PGS 1.3.15).

[10] Other deities occasionally referred to as bhūtānāṁ adhipati include Āditya (AB 7.34.2), Indra (AA 2.3.7.1), and Rudra (BSS 1.19, ApSS 3.4.8).

and his samānas being equated with the rājañya and the viś (PVB 19.12.3-5). This probably reflects the problems inherent in describing a changing socio-political situation in terms of existing definitional categories. More specifically, it would indicate that a more or less egalitarian situation was giving way to a stratified social order, corresponding with a change in the attributes associated with leaders or rulers.

A further definitional possibility, related to the process of social differentiation, is evident from the conceptualisation of ādhipatya in terms of social, including varṇa categories, Indra being characterised as the adhipati of kṣatra (SB 8.4.3.10), while the female divinities of the Day and Night (Ahorātra) were regarded as adhipatnīs of the śūdra and ārya respectively (ibid.:8.4.3.12).[11] This possibility was, however, not elaborated or developed in either the mythical or the ritual context. In the latter situation, the adhipati was ideally, as we shall see, a member of the second varṇa. What is likely is that while some members of each social category may have attempted to assert leadership over at least their own group, such attempts were not systematically validated, even though they were occasionally recognised. This is not surprising, as the legitimation of such possibilities would have weakened the position of those who aspired to control the entire social order. At the same time, the limited recognition accorded to these claims reflects the socio-political importance of the claimants. Hence, while such definitions could be marginalised, they could not be totally eliminated.

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[11] In the same context Aditi is referred to as the adhipatnī of the pitṛs (SB 8.4.3.7). All the divine adhipatnīs were conceived of as exercising power in their own right.

At another level, there is evidence for a tendency to define ādhipatya on both the divine and the human plane in terms of control over economic resources. Bṛhaspati, for example, was regarded as the adhipati of domesticated animals (grāmya paśu, SB 8.4.3.11), Varuṇa of one-hoofed animals (ibid.:8.4.3.13), Pūṣan of small animals (ibid.:8.4.3.14),[12] Vāyu of wild animals (ibid.:8.4.3.15), and Soma of plants (ibid.:8.4.3.17).[13]

In the human context, likewise, ādhipatya over both kinds of animals, domesticated and wild (grāmya and āraṇya respectively) was asserted through ritual variations (PVB 13.5.20, 23.13.2). Besides, the possibility of annasya ādhipatya (i.e., ādhipatya over food, PVB 22.9.3) and, more comprehensively, sarvasya annādasya ādhipatya (i.e., ādhipatya over all kinds of food, ibid.:23.14.3) was envisaged.

The definition of ādhipatya, like śraiṣṭhya in terms of grain and animals implied a claim to monopolise the use and/or ownership of such produce or productive resources. While the literal implementation of such assertions may not have been feasible, they suggest that an attempt was made to define the basis of power in terms of access to and control over material resources.

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[12] Pūṣan is elsewhere (SSS 16.1.14) referred to as pathīnām adhipati, i.e., as the adhipati of ways.

[13] It is evident that the notion of ādhipatya associated with specific deities did not stabilise in the brahmanical tradition. This is apparent from a comparison of the lists available in the SB (8.4.3), SSS (4.10.1), and PGS (1.5.10). While some deities such as Prajāpati were more or less consistently regarded as the adhipati of prajā (SB 8.4.3.3, SSS 4.10.1), others such as Varuṇa were associated with ādhipatya over one-hoofed animals (SB 8.4.3.13 dharma (SSS 4.10.1), and over the intermediate space, waters, ocean streams, food and sāmrājya (PGS 1.5.10).

Divine ādhipatya was often defined in terms of spatial categories, with Sūrya, Vāyu, and Agni being referred to as the adhipatis of the three worlds (lokas, PVB 6.7.2-3).[14] Elsewhere (SB 14.1.3.21-23), Savitṛ, Dhātṛ, and Bṛhaspati were described as the adhipatis of the earth while in another instance (SSS 6.3.1-7), Sūrya and Candra were described as the adhipatis of the east, Yama and Mṛtyu of the south, Mitra and Varuṇa of the west, Soma and Rudra of the north, Bṛhaspati and Indra of the upper region, Vāyu and Vṛṣṭi of the intermediate region, and Agni and Anna of the earth. Although such equations were not developed into associations with territoriality on either the divine or the human plane, they represent a tendency to define ādhipatya in relatively more concrete terms than śraiṣṭhya, as suggested earlier.

The association of ādhipatya with specific categories, whether social, economic, or spatial, marked an attempt to lend substance to definitions of control. To some extent, this is reflected in the very use of the suffix pati. As Gonda (1965:135) observes:

> The Indo-European poti-s, though translated by "lord, master," obviously denoted the one who holds rule over definite people, over definite objects, who wields power over a department or special sphere of influence.

It was probably this association with tangible definitions of power that gave ādhipatya its unique importance, and explains its incorporation amongst the goals envisaged in sacrifices such as the rājasūya and the vājapeya.

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[14] In one instance (AB 3.14.4) Agni is characterised as the adhipati of the heavenly world (svargasya lokasya adhipati).

If the spheres of influence delimited for the adhipati were different from those of the śreṣṭha, the role envisaged for the former in the economy reveals certain broadly similar concerns, although the relative emphasis on specific aspects varies considerably.

In the discussion on śraiṣṭhya, we had examined the channelising of cosmogonic speculation and its possible implications in terms of asserting control over the processes of production. Somewhat similar tendencies are discernible in the myths relating to Agni, although these were not developed as systematically or elaborately as in the case of Prajāpati.[15]

In the early Vedic tradition, Agni was virtually never associated with cosmogonic speculation. In fact, the creation of Agni from two pieces of wood, often referred to as his mothers (e.g., RV 1.31.2, 3.1.7) is frequently alluded to. In the later Vedic tradition, on the other hand, he was himself involved in creation, conceived of as stimulating or supporting the process. In one instance (SB 2.2.4.1-7), Prajāpati was thought to undertake creative activity in order to appease the hunger of Agni, the first-born, whereas in another myth (AB 3.13.10) Agni was conceived of as blowing on (and presumably purifying) the sperm of Prajāpati, released on account of his desire for his daughter, this in turn

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[15]It should be noted that Agni is not explicitly referred to as an adhipati in this context. However, some of the sacrifices which legitimated ādhipatya, such as the dvādaśāha, were amongst those which were allegedly devised by Prajāpati for creation. As such, claims to further cosmic activity were a recognised facet of ādhipatya, although it was not as central as in the case of śraiṣṭhya. The speculation on Agni's cosmogonic role may have implicitly reinforced this dimension of ādhipatya.

resulting in the creation of animals. In both instances, a connection was established between Agni and Prajāpati, the creator god par excellence. This would suggest an attempt to assign a role to Agni in cosmogonic myths with which he was not otherwise directly associated. Agni was also independently linked to the generative aspects of creation, being considered responsible for the growth of plants (AB 1.2.1, SB 1.6.1.8).

As noted earlier, the sacrifice was amongst the devices most commonly associated with creation. Given the centrality of Agni to the sacrificial cult, it was inevitable that the fire and its invocation would be invested with cosmogonic significance. Thus it is not surprising that the agnihotra or the daily offering into the fire was thought to produce everything (SB 2.3.4.8), being a means of attaining the saṁvatsara or the year, symbolic of totality (ibid.;2.3.3.18), the sacrificial fire being conceived of as extending to the three worlds (ibid.;2.1.4.11).[16]

Such associations were more systematically reiterated in the rituals which legitimated ādhipatya. These included variations of the soma sacrifice such as the pṛstha sadaha (PVB 13.9.23), the dvādaśāha (BSS 18.19), the ṛaabha ekāha (PVB 19.12.3), and vācastoma (SSS 15.11.1).[17] What is evident then is the deliberate building up of the cosmogonic role of the adhipati, who would, as a result,

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[16]The entire temporal framework was also encompassed within the ritual by an offering to the past and future, to the born and not born, to hope and reality, and to today and tomorrow (SB 2.3.1.24).

[17]Other sacrifices such as the rājasūya (BSS 10.56, SSS 15.12.1) which legitimated ādhipatya amongst other things, also figures amongst the means used by Prajāpati for creation.

have been regarded, like the śreṣṭha, as instrumental in ensuring the very basis of material prosperity.

At another level, a number of divine adhipatis were associated with the protection of what may be broadly defined as the environment. For instance, Varuṇa (SB 8.4.2.6) was invoked for the protection of the rain and wind, the Rudras (ibid.:8.4.2.7) for four-footed creatures, the Maruts (ibid.:8.4.2.8) for the garbha or embryo, Bṛhaspati (ibid.:8.4.2.10) for the directions, Ayavas (ibid.: 8.4.2.11) for prajā, while the Viśvedevas were to protect all bhūtas or beings (ibid.:8.4.2.12). In each case, they were invoked in order to free that particular element from evil and death. Although this was not explicitly reiterated in the ritual context, the depiction of the adhipati as protector would have reinforced the belief that ādhipatya was indeed beneficial to those who acceded to it.

Apart from being implicitly associated with ensuring material well-being, both the divine and the human adhipati were conceived of as either wealthy or aspiring to acquire wealth. The typical divine adhipati, Agni, was frequently described as rayipati or lord of wealth (RV 2.9.4, ApSS 6.13.2) and puṣṭipati or the lord of nourishment (ApSS 6.13.2).

In the ritual context, the soma sacrifice and its variants were, as noted earlier (Chapter II), viewed as especially suitable for the paśukāma and the annādyakāma. Other recognised means for acquiring ādhipatya over material resources included the use of the pārtha sāman (PVB 13.5.20) by means of which Pṛthu Vainya was supposed to have obtained ādhipatya over both domesticated and wild animals.

What is more interesting is the recommendation of sattras for the acquisition or legitimation of such control. These included the viṁśarātra, or twenty-day soma sacrifice, by which ādhipatya over anna was ensured (PVB 23.14.3). The gavām ayana, a year long sattra meant to confer ādhipatya, was also regarded as a means of acquiring saṁṛddhi or prosperity and paśu (ibid.:4.7.3,8).

The use of sattras assumes significance in view of the distinctive characteristics of the ritual. The term itself is unknown in the Rg Veda (VI:s.v.). While it has often been viewed as a vestige of communal sacrifices, the characteristics which were emphasised in the later Vedic tradition strengthened the bonds between those who actually participated in the ritual to the exclusion of others. This is suggested, for instance, by the very duration of such rituals, a sattra being, by definition, any soma sacrifice which lasted for more than twelve days, some sattras being conceived of as lasting for more than a year. As we have seen, longer sacrifices reduced the opportunities for the active participation of common people, and, as such, sattras would have in all likelihood been exclusive affairs.

The other feature associated with sattras is that theoretically, all participants were supposed to be of equal status, and each one was expected to benefit in an identical fashion. As an extension of this, there was no provision for the giving or receiving of dakṣiṇā (BSS 19.5). Hence, sattras reinforced the shared common interest of the group which undertook their performance. In terms of access to material resources, this was probably a means of supporting and legitimating one another's claims and evolving a

new basis of defining the control over productive resources or produce.[18]

What is also noteworthy is that the performance of sattras gradually fell into disfavour, with alternatives being recommended. In one instance (SB 12.1.3.23), the potential sattrin was advised to strive to attain the fruits of the sacrifice through satya, śrama, tapas, śraddhā, yajña, and āhuti (truthfulness, effort, austerity, faith, sacrifice, and offering respectively) whereas in other cases, routine household rituals such as the agnihotra (ibid.: 12.4.1.1) and the pañcamahāyajñas (ibid.:11.5.6.1) were equated with sattras.[19] Such equations suggest that while the symbolic importance of sattras continued to be recognised, their actual performance was avoided. This ambiguity reflects the changing situation, in which established ritual practices could not be overtly challenged, although their continued performance was viewed as undesirable. The attempt of the brahmanical authors to distance themselves from this particular type of sacrifice was probably due to the fact that some of the participants may have belonged to non-priestly categories, and as such, the ritual, by suggesting an inherent equality of status, would have run counter to the tendency to legitimise differences amongst social categories. Hence, this aspect of ādhipatya was not developed further.

The relationship envisaged between ādhipatya and procreation was broadly similar to that of the śreṣṭha. Agni, the divine

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[18] As in the case of the śreṣṭha, land does not figure in such discussions, suggesting that the assertion of individual control was either not considered possible or important in the prevailing circumstances.

[19] Elsewhere (BDS 1.2.4.7), brahmacarya was regarded as a dīrghasattra or long sattra.

adhipati, was, like Indra, regarded as the embodiment of masculinity, being literally nṛtama, the most masculine of men (RV 4.5.2)[20] and was invoked throughout the brahmanical tradition for granting progeny in general (e.g., RV 6.13.6, PGS 1.5.11) and sons in particular (e.g., RV 6.13.6, SSS 4.13.1, ApSS 6.6.4). Apart from the worship of the personified deity, the very establishment of the sacrificial fire was associated with procreation (ASS 2.3.27, SSS 2.13.4, ApSS 5.8.8). As suggested earlier, the invocation of a male god and the emphasis on masculinity tended to ritualise procreation, and was a means of asserting male control over the procreative process.

The conceptualisation of the human adhipati also reinforced masculine imagery. This is evident, for instance, in the equation of the adhipati with the ṛṣabha or bull (PVB 19.12.3), the embodiment of virility. Besides, as in the case of the śreṣṭha, the rituals which legitimated ādhipatya such as the dvādaśāha (PVB 11.3.5, AB 4.19.1, BSS 16.4, ASS 10.5.12), gavām ayana (PVB 4.3.7-8, SSS 13.28.4), and the durāśa (BSS 18.42), were all viewed as a means of obtaining prajā. The ritual devices used included the mithuna employed in the soma sacrifice and its variants (e.g., AB 5.24.4) and in the gavām ayana (PVB 4.2.18).

If the concern for acquiring prajā, paśu and anna was common to the adhipati and the śreṣṭha, there was a certain difference in the use envisaged for such resources. On the divine plane, invocations to Agni for economic support are characteristic of

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[20] The daily agnihotra was also equated with retas or semen (ApSS 6.6.1) and was regarded as a means of obtaining sons (SSS 2.9.8, ApSS 6.6.4) or offspring (SB 2.2.4.7, BSS 3.7, SSS 2.14.2, ApSS 6.8.4).

both the early and the later Vedic tradition.[21] However, Agni was not regarded as an adhipati in any of these cases. In other words, there was no explicit obligation to be generous associated with definitions of ādhipatya in myths. This is corroborated by the evidence on the human plane, where there are no indications that the adhipati was associated with generosity.

The adhipati was, nevertheless, associated with certain exchanges in the sacrificial context. These included the giving of dakṣiṇā, which involved significantly larger numbers of animals than in the case of the śreṣṭha, as, apart from the sattras, the other rites prescribed for legitimating ādhipatya were longer, more complicated versions of the soma sacrifice.[22] The significance of such exchanges in furthering the process of social differentiation has been referred to earlier (Chapter II). As such, it is likely that ādhipatya, even more than śraiṣṭhya, was associated with the accentuation of socio-economic differences. At the same time, the exclusive claim of the adhipati to some economic resources may have made his position less socially acceptable than the śreṣṭha's, who at least theoretically attempted to ensure the welfare of his dependants.

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[21] His generosity is typified by epithets such as dravinadā (i.e., the giver of wealth) and ratnadhāḥ (the giver of precious things, RV 2.1.7). Prayers were addressed to him for food (ibid.: 3.23.2), cattle (ibid.:3.1.23), and rayi (ibid.:4.2.20). The term rayi is in itself significant as it signifies objects to be given to others (Roy 1984:51). In the later tradition, the establishment of the sacrificial fire, the agnyādheya, was regarded as a means of obtaining paśu (SSS 2.13.4) and anna (BSS 2.16), while the daily performance of the agnihotra was also thought to ensure similar results (BSS 3.5, SSS 10.14.8, ApSS 6.11.5). Besides, Agni was invoked during the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice in order to obtain anna (BSS 1.15).

[22] For instance, the dakṣiṇā prescribed for the ṛṣabha ekāha was one hundred and twelve ṛṣabhas or bulls or a thousand (LSS 9.4.20). Alternatively, oxen or calves could be given.

IV

As in the sphere of the economy, the roles envisaged for the adhipati in society run, in part, parallel to those of the śreṣṭha. However, these are relatively less developed, and, in some cases, suggest an imitation of the functions of the śreṣṭha rather than an independent development. While the "shallow" social role of the adhipati is in itself significant, the elements which were incorporated from the definition of śraiṣṭhya point to the importance of certain issues or conflicts in contemporary society.

To start with the issue of varṇa, the divine adhipatis were virtually never associated with the creation of the hierarchy, although they were occasionally invoked to protect specific categories For instance, Vāc, as adhipatnī, was invoked to protect brahma (SB 8.4.2.3), Viṣṇu to protect kṣatra (ibid.:8.4.2.4), and Dhātṛ tc protect the viś (ibid.:8.4.2.5). In each case, what was desired was the freeing of the particular category from evil and death--what is noteworthy is that the benefits sought were not hierarchically ordered according to varṇa. Hence, while different social categories were recognised as existing, enforcing or maintaining social differences was not regarded as intrinsic to ādhipatya.

On the divine plane, moreover, the varṇa affiliation of the typical adhipati, Agni, was by no means finally settled. As we have seen (Chapter II), he was often regarded as the representative of the priestly category and was conceived of as symbolic of its supremacy (e.g., BSS 18.35, SSS 14.29.2). Elsewhere (SB 2.4.3.6, 6.6.1.7), he symbolised the kṣatra, and in this capacity was conceived of as ensuring its dominance over the viś, represented by the Ādityas and Maruts, who were compared to the body, with Agni Vaiśvānara representing the head. This association of the

adhipati with kṣatra is reinforced by specific references to other divine adhipatis such as Indra (SB 8.4.3.10) as representatives of the same category, a possibility which was evidently well-known on the human plane, as suggested by the analogy equating the adhipati with the rājaṅya (PVB 19.12.3).

The use of modifications of the soma sacrifice for legitimating ādhipatya would have meant a broad reiteration of the concerns regarding varṇa reflected in the basic ritual. For instance, the ṛṣabha ekāha was viewed as a means of attaching the viś to the kṣatra (PVB 19.12.6), it being rendered anapakrāmukā (i.e., not-wandering) in that context. Another ritual legitimating ādhipatya, the gavām ayana, included a mock battle between the śūdra and the ārya (PVB 5.5.14) in which the latter was to emerge victorious. This would have made the status of the śūdra in the varṇa order explicit.[23] By and large, however, upholding or defining the varṇa hierarchy was not central to ādhipatya, as is evident from the paucity of attempts to connect the institution with this aspect of the social order.

The intervention of the adhipati in kinship based conflicts was also relatively limited, in most cases simply reiterating the concerns associated with Indra and the human śreṣṭha. This is evident from attempts to assign a role to Agni in the conflict against Vṛtra, which, however, rarely extended beyond the occasional use of the epithet vṛtrahan (e.g., RV 1.74.3) and from myths

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[23] The fight was also given a cosmic dimension, being equated with the conflict between the devas and the asuras. At another level, it was equated with the fight between the yajamāna and his bhrātṛvya.

relating to his role in the fight against the asuras[24] in which context he was occasionally referred to as an adhipati (e.g., AB 3.14.4).[25] As we have seen, Vṛtra and the asuras were frequently equated with hostile kinsmen. Hence it is not surprising that Agni was invoked in the daily agnihotra to destroy the sapatna and the bhrātṛvya (BSS 3.8, ApSS 6.20.2). At another level, destroying such enemies was a recurrent theme in the soma sacrifice and its variants.

The incorporation of the deva-asura/Vṛtra and yajamāna-bhrātṛ or sapatna struggle into the notion of ādhipatya at a variety of levels points to its importance in the contemporary context. However other dimensions of kinship relations were not systematically absorbed. For instance, while paternalism was a characteristic of Agni throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g., RV 2.1.9, ApSS 5.16.1), this was not directly related to ādhipatya, and although rituals legitimating the institution would have reiterated the patrilineal connections of the adhipati, this was not explicitly emphasised.[27]

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[24] As noted earlier, Agni, like many other gods, was himself regarded as an asura in the early Vedic tradition (e.g., RV 2.1.6). At the same time, he was often invoked, like Indra, against the Dāsas (e.g., RV 3.12.6) and Dasyus (ibid.:3.29.9), besides being invoked against śatrus in general (ibid.:4.4.5).

[25] Agni was also credited with devising a strategy to overcome the asuras (SB 1.2.4.11) and preventing an asura named Araru from entering heaven (ibid.:1.2.4.18).

[26] For instance, the performance of the ṛṣabha ekāha (SSS 10.15.8) was thought to ensure that the yajamāna would become free from bhrātṛvyas (abhrātṛvya) as this was regarded as the means whereby the devas overcame the asuras.

[27] Similarly, the conceptualisation of Agni as gṛhapati (e.g. RV 7.15.2), literally the lord or master of the gṛha, which acquir increasing significance with the emergence of the gṛha as the dominant and ideal domestic unit (discussed in Chapter VIII), was not directly related to ādhipatya.

The position of the adhipati vis-a-vis gender stratification was, likewise, not clearly defined. On the divine plane, as we have seen, a number of adhipatnīs are referred to. These include Aditi, Vāc, the Day and Night. In each of these cases adhipatnīs were conceived of as exercising power in their own rights, and not on the basis of their association with a male adhipati. Moreover, the typical divine adhipati, Agni, was not conceived of as participating in gender-related conflicts, unlike Indra or Prajāpati. However, the utilisation of variations of the soma sacrifice to legitimise ādhipatya would have meant a reiteration of gender-defined norms in the human situation.

In each of these social contexts, what emerges then is a certain dichotomy between the mythical and the ritual or human situation. In the former, virtually all the references to divine adhipatis indicate that ādhipatya was not conceived of in relation to social conflicts--where, as in the case of Agni, such a relationship was envisaged, this is clearly influenced by the conceptualisation of Indra. However, in the human situation, the position envisaged for the adhipati was virtually identical with that of the śreṣṭha, although less developed. At the same time, other possibilities hinted at in myths were not translated into the ritual or human situation. As we have seen, divine adhipatis were invoked for the protection of varṇa categories;references to divine adhipatnīs are also significant, pointing as they do to the absence of gender stratification in determining access to the position. The fact that these possibilities were not extended to the human context indicates a fundamental transformation in the social role envisaged for the adhipati. As we shall see (Chapter V), similar changes are discernible in the context of rājya as well.

The changing social role of the adhipati meant that mechanisms to fulfil his earlier functions were no longer adequate. At the same time, evolving and maintaining new mechanisms may have proved difficult to justify in terms of the earlier established definitions of ādhipatya. It is this which probably explains the paucity of references to such mechanisms on both the divine and the human planes. What is more, even the limited possibilities envisaged in myths were not developed in the ritual or human context. For instance the means of acquiring access to resources such as the bhāga or share, referred to in myths, are not reiterated in the human situation. In one instance (PVB 6.7.3), there is mention of approaching the divine adhipatis, Sūrya, Vāyu and Agni[28] with a bhāga during the soma sacrifice. Elsewhere (SB 8.4.2.3-12), bhāga and ādhipatya were ascribed to different deities, who were, however, jointly expected to protect the social and material order.[29] In both these

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[28] Agni was also the typical divine atithi (RV 2.2.8). While the importance of hospitality as a means of gaining access to resources has been referred to earlier, this attribute of Agni was not associated with ādhipatya on either the divine or the human plane. Agni was also conceived of as receiving bali (ibid.:5.1.10), but this was, once again, not associated with ādhipatya.

[29] Thus a bhāga was given to Agni and ādhipatya to Vāc or Dīkṣā (SB 8.4.2.3) as a means of freeing brahman from evil and death, a bhāga to Indra and ādhipatya to Viṣṇu in order to free kṣatra (ibid.: 8.4.2.4), a bhāga to Nṛcakṣu and ādhipatya to Dhātṛ in order to free the viś (ibid.:8.4.2.5), a bhāga to Mitra and ādhipatya to Varuṇa (ibid.:8.4.2.6) to free the rain and the wind, a bhāga to the Vasus and ādhipatya to the Rudras to free four-footed creatures (ibid.: 8.4.2.7), a bhāga to the Adityas and ādhipatya to the Maruts to free the garbha or embryo (ibid.:8.4.2.8), a bhāga to Aditi and ādhipatya to Pūṣan to free ojas or strength (ibid.:8.4.2.9), a bhāga to Savitṛ and ādhipatya to Bṛhaspati to free the directions (ibid.:8.4.2.10), a bhāga to the Yavas and ādhipatya to the Ayavas to free all prajā (ibid.:8.4.2.11), and a bhāga to the Ṛbhus and ādhipatya to the Viśvedevas to free all bhūtas (ibid.:8.4.2.12).

contexts, bhāga was used in the sense of a sacrificial offering, the exact constituents of which are not specified.[30]

The absence of references to a bhāga for the human adhipati was probably related to the fact that his role was increasingly envisaged in terms of social differentiation. As such, claims to the bhāga, justified on the basis of universal protection, were probably difficult to uphold. The inability to claim access to such resources was, moreover, reflected in the situation of the adhipati vis-a-vis coercive mechanisms.

There are some indications that the adhipati was able to coerce opponents into submission. In one instance Agni, described as svargasya lokasya adhipati, i.e., as the adhipati of the heavenly world (AB 3.14.4), refused to let the Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas and Viśvedevas enter his realm until they praised him. Ultimately, they gave in, praised the adhipati and gained access to his realm. However, the absence of similar references in the human situation suggests that while coercion was envisaged as a possibility, it was more difficult to implement in practice.

As significant, the adhipati had little or no direct access to or control over ritual situations, which, as we have seen, provided important occasions for communicating values and norms governing social relations. When one examines the links between adhipatya and the realm of the sacred, the paucity of mythical associations is remarkable. As noted earlier, while Agni was inevitably connected to the ritual, as the very personification

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[30] The association of bhāga with individual deities would at the same time indicate a certain shift in its significance, from a share available to all members of the community to a more exclusive definition where a share was offered to certain selected members to the exclusion of others.

of the sacrificial fire,[31] this was not explicitly associated with his role as adhipati but was ascribed to his role as messenger between gods and men (RV 4.1.8, SB 1.4.1.34). This was often extended to attempts to identify him with the more important categories of priests.[32]

The absence of any direct link between ādhipatya and the realm of the sacred is also corroborated by references to other divine adhipatis. As we have seen, while such divinities were associated with a variety of spheres of control or influence, these were not directly related to sacred categories. In this context, the lack of references to human adhipatis as controllers, protectors, or even initiators of sacral activites does not seem to be accidental, but would suggest that claims to defining or upholding the realm of the sacred were not intrinsic to ādhipatya.

To an extent, this is corroborated by the sacrifices which legitimated ādhipatya. As noted earlier, these were not independent rituals but were basically adaptations or modifications of the more complex versions of the soma sacrifice. These included the prṣṭha ṣaḍaha (PVB 13.9.23), the dvādaśāha (ibid.:11.10.21, BSS 18.19)[33] and the ṛṣabha ekāha (PVB 19.12.3). Besides, ādhipatya could be attained, as one amongst many possible goals, through the performance of sacrifices such as the vācastoma (SSS 15.11.1), sarvamedha

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[31] Hence he was regarded as the yoni or womb of the sacrifice (SB 1.5.2.11) and was occasionally equated with it (PVB 11.5.2).

[32] For instance, he was regarded as the embodiment of the qualities of the hotṛ, potṛ, ṛtvik, neṣṭṛ, agnidhra, praśastṛ, adhvaryu, brāhmaṇa, and gṛhapati (RV 2.1.2). More commonly, he was regarded as the divine hotṛ, as noted earlier, and was occasionally characterised as the first purohita (ibid.:5.11.2).

[33] Here, the use of the yama sāman (PVB 11.10.21) ensured ādhipatya in the world beyond.

(SB 13.7.1.1, SSS 16.15.1), rājasūya (BSS 10.56, SSS 15.12.1), vājapeya (ASS 9.9.1), brhaspatisava (ASS 9.5.3), and the durasa (BSS 18.40).[34] While the performance of such relatively complex rituals did provide an occasion for communicating information regarding the power and status of the yajamāna, the adhipati himself would have been increasingly dependent on the priesthood for access to the sacred.

As significant is the absence of myths explaining the emergence or existence of ādhipatya. While this may have been due to the relative unimportance of ādhipatya from the point of view of the authors of the brahmanical tradition, it may also point to a certain discord between the earlier and later definitions of ādhipatya referred to above. In such a situation, the divine adhipatis/ adhipatnīs were probably no longer regarded as useful reference points for their human counterparts.

However, in spite of the conflicts and tensions evident in the definition of ādhipatya, this was encompassed within rājya through rituals such as the rājasūya and the vājapeya as noted above. We would suggest that the incorporation of ādhipatya was probably precisely due to the fact that it meant different things to different people. As such, different social categories could identify t themselves with a man who claimed to be an adhipati amongst other things. At the same time, the definition of ādhipatya was closely approximating that of śraiṣṭhya. As a result, certain definitional

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[34] Other "means" of acquiring ādhipatya included the knowledge that the thirty-three versed stoma was the adhipati amongst stomas, as was man amongst animals (PVB 6.2.7) and knowledge that man eats with his head held erect while animals eat with their heads bent down (ibid.:6.2.8-9).

possibilities were eschewed, whereas others were modified. What is significant is that the definition of ādhipatya which was ultimately considered acceptable and reinforced through ritual reiteration was that which related the institution to a stratified socio-political order.

V

The insistence on institutionalising social stratification was not, however, the only tendency at work. In fact, occasionally, almost conflicting possibilities were assimilated within the definition of rājya. One such possibility, which had little or no connection with the hierarchical social order, was vairājya. Interpretations of the term focus on its associations with universality and creativity, including generative activities.[35] As noted earlier (Section I), the same term was used to indicate a metre which was frequently employed in the ritual context, the attributes associated with both the personage and the metre often revealing broad similarities. At another level, we will argue that the equation established between vairājya and a particular metre was a device for ritually, and hence legitimately, appropriating the characteristics of the position in question.

A distinguishing feature of vairājya was that it was never defined in terms of categories or groups over which or in relation to which it was exercised. While this lent a certain universality to it, as in the case of the Prajāpati form of śraiṣṭhya, it also meant that the virāj was not conceived of as distinct from those

[35]For instance, Gonda (1969:118) suggests that the term indicates "a power of very high rank representing universal expansiveness, which involves: being powerful and creative, producing food and refreshment." Elsewhere (1986:88) he suggests that "virāj, she 'whose eminent universal sovereignty has a wide scope in every direction' is also the hypostatization of the universe as a whole." Other definitions include "ruling far and wide, sovereign, excellent, splendid, a ruler, chief, king or queen" (SED: s.v.). On the other hand Basu (1925:58) argues that virāj "seems to signify a title of royalty, but its metaphorical use throughout the Ṛg Veda does not allow us to derive from it much useful knowledge about the king." In later literature such as the Kauṭiliyan Arthaśāstra, the term occasionally means the absence of kingly office (R.S.Sharma 1968:52).

or that over which he or she exercised control. In fact, as we shall see, the notion of control is particularly inadequate for an analysis of vairājya, which was conceived of as an all-pervasive, beneficial power which did not imply relationships of domination and subordination.

The role envisaged for the virāj (feminine) in creation explores the possibility of alternative relationships. In the Puruṣasūkta (RV 10.90.5), while Virāj was not viewed as the sole creator, she was conceived of as being produced by puruṣa or the primeval being (masculine) and in turn, produced him. Apart from the fact that this associates heterosexual intercourse with creation, what is unique to this mythic episode is that it conceives of creator and created as mutually, in fact identically, supportive of one another, so much so that their very roles were regarded as interchangeable.[36] This possibility, marginalised within the brahmanical tradition, presents an obvious contrast with the Prajāpati-centred cosmogonies discussed earlier.

As the association of the virāj with creation would suggest, the human virāj was not conceived of as controlling material resources or even aspiring to such control. In fact, the virāj metre was frequently identified with economic resources. For instance, it was equated with anna (SB 12.2.4.5, AA 1.4.1.7). More specifically, the metre was identified with what were probably the ten most important products (PVB 16.1.10)--the cow, horse, mule, ass, goat, sheep,

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[36] A similar possibility is envisaged in the characterisation of Aditi (RV 1.89.10), occasionally identified with the virāj, as heaven, the intermediate region, mother, father, son, the Viśvedevas, pañcajanas, and all that is born and is to be born. In this conceptualisation, the creatrix is regarded as indistinguishable from her creations. She "is" these.

rice, barley, sesamum, and beans. This total identification between a status category and material resources is broadly similar to that observed in the case of Prajāpati referred to earlier. It contrasts with the association of possessing or controlling such resources evident in the definition of śraiṣṭhya typified by Indra, and in that of ādhipatya. What is more specific to virāj is the predominant association with food or anna, which was, as we have seen, an important element of the networks of exchange which were often used to bind together those who aspired to dominance with their subordinates.

The identity of the virāj with material resources was manipulated in the ritual context to ensure success for the sacrificer who wished to acquire the ability to eat food (e.g., PVB 4.8.4, SSS 14.25.1, ApSS 22.10.21). Occasionally, the possible consequences of using the metre were elaborated (e.g., AB 1.1.6) as enabling a man to become annāda (an eater of food), annapati (a master of food), and to eat along with his prajā, besides attaining annādya or the ability to eat food.[37] Occasionally, the use of the vairāja sāman was regarded as a means of obtaining prajā and paśu (CU 2.16.2) or all desires (SB 1.5.2.20).

The emphasis on the use of the virāj to acquire anna ties in with the identity established between the metre and food. More important, perhaps, is the conceptualisation of the virāj as an instrument for ensuring access to food. We have seen that while prosperity was a characteristic of both the śreṣṭha and the adhipati, the former was under some obligation to be generous, unlike the latter. As opposed to this, the virāj, while symbolising prosperity,

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[37] According to the CU (4.3.8), knowledge of the virāj was a means of becoming annāda.

was not differentiated from it. Apart from this, invoking the virāj was viewed as a mechanism of appropriating the very prosperity and resources inherent in it.

The implications of this were probably two-fold--on the one hand, the human virāj may have been associated with a more equitable distribution of produce, if not productive resources, in contrast to the śreṣṭha or the adhipati, this providing the analogical basis for the use of the virāj metre in the ritual context. On the other hand, the very use of the metre in the sacrifice, which was increasingly becoming converted into an occasion for legitimating socio-economic differentiation, would have meant that the attributes associated with vairājya would be subject to manipulation in favour of the newly emerging order. In other words, while the virāj himself/ herself was associated with the distribution rather than the control over produce, the symbolic appropriation of this relationship in the ritual context would have distorted it, with those who aspired to the socio-political benefits of annādya, referred to earlier, skewing the distribution (both in material and in social terms), in their favour.[38]

This process is often explicitly recognised within the brahmanical tradition. In one instance (SB 12.6.1.40), the virāj was equated with the earth, it being stated that whoever has the most of it (bhūyiṣṭham labhati) becomes a śreṣṭha. Thus the relationship between vairājya and śraiṣṭhya was conceived of in clearly exploitative and appropriative terms.

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[38] As we shall see, the virāj did not directly depend on the performance of sacrifices to legitimate his/her status. As such, ritual exchanges such as dakṣiṇā, which, we have argued, intensified socio-economic differences, would have been irrelevant in the context of vairājya.

The absence of a definite role for the virāj vis-a-vis the social issues identified earlier is also significant. Unlike the other metres such as the gāyatrī, triṣṭubh, or jagatī, which were frequently equated with the brahma, kṣatra, and viś respectively and manipulated in the ritual context to ensure the "proper" varṇa configurations, the virāj metre was not used to express such social concerns. This was probably owing to the universality characteristic of vairājya, which could not be easily constricted into a particularistic framework.[39]

This is corroborated when one turns to the other major area of socio-political conflict, that amongst kinsmen. There are only a few references to the virāj being sapatnahā (a destroyer of rival kinsmen, BSS 6.28, ApSS 11.12.2). This is, once again, significant, given the widespread use of the metre in the ritual.

Given the importance assigned to defining gender stratification in the context of śraiṣṭhya, and to a lesser extent, ādhipatya, the frequent conceptualisation of the virāj in feminine terms on both the divine and the human plane presents a striking contrast. Amongst goddesses, Aditi, typifying the earth (SB 2.2.1.20), Vāc (ibid.: 3.5.1.34), and Śrī (ibid.:11.4.3.18) were symbolised by the virāj metre. As we have seen (Chapter II), these goddesses were conceived of as attempting to counter the process of gender stratification in particular and socio-political differentiation in general, with very limited success. To an extent, this reflects the fate of vairājya as a possibility of ordering socio-political ties, a possibility which was appropriated, but at the same time marginalised within

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[39] There are, further, no references to the varṇa of the human virāj.

the brahmanical tradition. This shift is symbolised in the characterisation of the virāj as the wife of Indra (BAU 4.2.3), a relationship which would have emphasised the dependence and instrumentality of the former vis-a-vis the latter.

References to vairājya as a possibility accessible to women are relatively few. Nevertheless, these are significant, given the complete absence of such possibilities as far as other positions of status are concerned. Occasionally (e.g., BSS 1.12) a prayer was recommended during the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice to ensure that the son of the yajamāna would become a destroyer of enemies (śatruṭ), while his daughter would become a virāj.[40] In this situation, the woman herself may have had little or no say in the matter. Besides, the context of vairājya was clearly envisaged as domestic--the universal aspect of vairājya associated with Aditi, for instance, would be dismissed with lip service in such a situation. The restricted context also probably resulted, at another level, in reinforcing the instrumental aspects of vairājya referred to earlier, an instrumentality which was increasingly being brought under patriarchal control.

It will be obvious that the mechanisms we have traced in connection with the exercise of śraiṣṭhya, and, to a lesser extent, ādhipatya, were irrelevant in the context of vairājya, where enforcing relations of dominance and subordination were not conceived of as centrally or even marginally important. The alternative mechanisms by which beneficial forces were thought to be disseminated rather than individualistically accumulated can only be tentatively reconstructed.

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[40] This reminds one of Śacī Paulomī's claim (RV 10.159.3) that her daughter was a virāj.

One such mechanism was probably the sacrifice, in which the use of the virāj metre was considered indispensable. This is evident from the statement (PVB 6.8.1) that a true sacrifice was possible only if the metre was used while starting the ritual, and from the equation between the metre and the sacrifice in general (SB 2.3.1.18), the former being regarded as a means of conveying the ritual to the devas and bringing it back to men (ibid.:3.3.2.16). This would suggest that vairājya was conceived of in terms of a beneficient and communicative form of sacrality.

More specifically, the metre was associated with the basic soma sacrifice. For instance, the entire soma sacrifice was conceived of as being established on the virāj (ĀB 3.15.6).[41] Thus, the metre was virtually identified with the ritual and its success. This association was in many ways reminiscent of that of Prajāpati, referred to earlier.

What is also significant is that virtually no sacrifice was recommended for the exclusive attainment of vairājya.[42] In other words, while the virāj was expected to ensure general well-being through close association or even identification with the sacrifice, she/he did not directly depend on the ritual as a means of legitimating his/her position. This may have been due to the fact that

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[41] Incidentally, this is corroborated by the ApSS (6.13.9) which cites a Bahvṛca Brāhmaṇa (i.e., a Brāhmaṇa of the Ṛg Vedic tradition) according to which the virāj consists of ten syllables and the sacrifice is established on it.

[42] The closest approximation to such a position is the ritual known as the virāṭ-svārājya by means of which Mitra was supposed to have attained vairājya, while Varuṇa attained svārājya (SSS 14.30.1).

vairājya, with relatively non-hierarchical connotations, did not require ritual legitimation, possibly enjoying a certain amount of popular acceptance. It is also likely that, because of these connotations, vairājya was not regarded as particularly convenient from the point of view of the brahmanical tradition, which, more often than not, reiterated and reinforced various socio-political hierarchies. Hence, it is not surprising that the possibilities inherent in vairājya were not elaborated or legitimised through rituals or myths.

Nevertheless, vairājya, like ādhipatya, was incorporated within the composite definition of rājya (e.g., AB 8.39.5). This was probably a means of creating a wider acceptance for rājya, which would thus be associated, hypothetically at least, with notions of general well-being. It was this element of universal benevolence which was the greatest strength of vairājya and its incorporation within rājya, even as an (possibly unrealisable) ideal, would have conferred greater legitimacy on the latter.

Yet, there was a fundamental conflict between the notion of rājya, especially as it developed over time, and that of vairājya. This was inevitable, given the growing association of the rājā with a hierarchical social order.[43] As opposed to this, vairājya typified the aspirations of a less stratified society. Ultimately, the breach between the two positions widened irrevocably. This is reflected in the sharply divergent etymological derivations of virāj--as one who is an excellent ruler (viśeṣeṇa rājate iti virāj), and as one from whom the rājya has departed (vigatam rajyam yasmāt

[43] For details, see Chapter V.

saḥ virāj). Thus, vairājya, instead of representing the very best elements of rājya, came to be associated with what was perceived as a dangerous condition of kinglessness.

VI

If the possibilities inherent in vairājya were marginalised in the process of its amalgamation into the definition of rājya, these were, at another level, countered through the development of the notion of svārājya. As the very use of the prefix sva indicates, the concept of svārājya emphasised the distinct position of the ruler vis-a-vis those over whom he exercised control. This is reflected in the meanings assigned to the term, which include connotations of independent rule, uncontrolled dominance, and sovereignty (SED:s.v.), "supremacy" (Caland 1931:517) and "self-ruler or king" (VI:s.v.).

As mentioned earlier, while svārājya was an attribute of a number of deities, it was not typical or specific to any one of them. Moreover, on the human plane, even incidental references to the characteristics of svarāj are sparse. In this situation, the major source of information is provided by the rituals prescribed for the attainment of svārājya.

On the divine plane, svarāj were conceived of as exercising control over categories from which they were, to some extent at least, differentiated. For instance, the Maruts (RV 5.58.1) were referred to as amṛtasya svarājaḥ (i.e., lords of immortality). Elsewhere (SSS 15.11.1), Vāc was conceived of as acquiring svārājya amongst other things, over all creatures (sarveṣām bhūtānām... svārājyam), while Varuṇa, himself a typical rājā, was thought to assert svārājya over all rājyas (sarveṣām rājyānām...svārājyam, ibid.:15.12.1). What is also significant is that in the case of Vāc and Varuṇa, control was explicitly envisaged over the totality of the category in question. This notion was reiterated in the conceptualisation of the svārājya of Indra (RV 8.93.11), which

could not be challenged by either the devas or men, implying that it was exercised over them.

On the human plane, there is some indication that svārājya was conceived of as control or dominance of the category to which the svarāj belonged. This is suggested by the statement (PVB 10.3.8) that the knowledge that the bṛhatī metre was a svarāj amongst metres enabled the sacrificer to attain svārājya. However, unlike the śreṣṭha and the adhipati, the svarāj was not explicitly associated with samānas, svā, or manuṣyas.

Svārājya in the human context was also associated with the control of specific directions, such as the west (AB 8.38.3) and the north (SSS 17.16.2). However, this did not imply territorial control.

While the divine svarājs were not explicitly associated with cosmogonic speculation, they were considered responsible for ensuring the pre-conditions of material well-being, a prayer being offered to them in the course of the soma sacrifice (LSS 3.5.15) in order to obtain rain, food, wealth, and prosperity. A similar connection was reiterated in the ritual context, where the gosava, which legitimated svārājya (PVB 19.13.1), was also regarded as a means of ensuring general fertility.

Svārājya was associated with the control of at least some productive resources. This is evident from the statement (PVB 24.6.3) that the man who possesses numerous cattle acquires svārājya.[44] Besides, the gosava, which legitimated svārājya, was also recommended for the paśukāma (ASS 9.8.12, SSS 14.15.1). We had earlier suggested

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[44] Yaḥ vai paśūnām bhūmānam gacchati saḥ svārājyam gacchati.

that such aspirations, recognised within the sacrificial context, may have been a means of asserting claims over specific resources. These claims assumed greater significance in a situation where cattle were used in ritual exchanges such as dakṣiṇā which, as we have seen, reinforced the process of socio-political differentiation. The desire to acquire progeny, whose implications have been examined, was also reiterated in the gosava and the variations of the soma sacrifice which legitimated svārājya. There is a specific reference to acquiring sons through a thirty-six year long sattra which legitimated svārājya (PVB 25.7.4). While the actual performance of such a ritual was obviously not possible, what is significant in the present context is the connection envisaged between acquiring progeny and a position of power and authority.

A distinctive feature of svārājya was the enormous dakṣiṇā prescribed for the rituals which legitimated it. The recommended dakṣiṇā for the gosava, for instance, ranged from ten thousand (ASS 9.8.14) to sixty-three thousand (SSS 14.15.6) or a myriad (ayūta dakṣiṇā, BSS 18.7), presumably cattle. Another sacrifice legitimating svārājya, the pauṇḍarīka ekādaśāha (a variation on the eleven-day soma sacrifice, PVB 22.18.2), is once again described as an ayūta dakṣiṇā sacrifice (BSS 16.32), with the gift of a thousand horses being explicitly specified (BSS 16.32).

While both svārājya and vairājya were associated with general well-being, they were thus diametrically opposed to one another in terms of the control of material resources. The contrast is particularly stark if one focuses on the use envisaged for such resources--the distribution of resources by the svarāj was clearly directional and socially differentiated, and was meant to strengthen his claims to status. The virāj, on the other hand, was associated

with an undifferentiated distribution network, which was, however, subject to manipulation, as we have seen.

The social role envisaged for the svarāj, likewise, reveals some similarities as well as certain fundamental differences with that of the virāj. Like vairājya, svārājya was not directly related, on either the divine or the human plane, to the concerns of the varṇa hierarchy. Nevertheless, the use of variations of the soma sacrifice to legitimate svārājya meant that at least some statements about it would have been woven into the definition of svārājya.[45]

A similar tendency is apparent in connection with the relationship amongst kinsmen. This is evident from the myth of Indra's acquisition of svārājya (RV 1.80.1,2) after driving away the serpent Ahi and striking down Vṛtra. This association was reiterated in the use of variations in the soma sacrifice to legitimate svārājya.[46] Such rituals would have also emphasised the importance of patrilineal connections, as noted earlier.

The contrast between vairājya and svārājya is also evident with reference to gender stratification. The former was, as we have seen, characterised by feminine elements. In the case of the latter, apart from the emphasis on establishing a gender hierarchy inherent in legitimation through variations in the soma sacrifice, the gosava, prescribed for the same end, involved an assertion of control over three women--the yajamāna's mother, his sister, and a woman belonging

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[45] This would be somewhat similar to the position of the adhipati, referred to earlier.

[46] In the ApSS (11.12.2), the svarāj is characterised as abhimātihā, i.e., a destroyer of enemies. However, here the focus was on general rather than specific kinds of enmity.

to the same gotra, the yajamāna being expected to mate with them in order to ensure fertility (ApSS 22.13.2).[47] What is significant is that if the soma sacrifice entailed the particular subjugation of the wife, the gosava extended such possibilities to women who could not, by definition, be encompassed within the category of wifehood.

As in the case of ādhipatya and vairājya, the mechanisms whereby svārājya was exercised are not explicitly mentioned. It is possible, however, that the very sacrifices which provided for the legitimation of the position, functioned at the same time as a mechanism for exercising svārājya.[48]

The sacrifices prescribed for the legitimation of svārājya included, as we have seen, the gosava. Apart from the features of the ritual referred to earlier, it was characterised by an abhiṣeka of the yajamāna with fresh milk, which was considered symbolic of svārājya (PVB 19.13.7). As we shall see (Chapter VI), the abhiṣeka or consecration was closely associated with the conferring of rājya, hence, the use of an identical, if simpler procedure in the context of svārājya would have drawn attention to the similarities envisaged between the two.

As in the case of ādhipatya, svārājya was recognised amongst the many goals which could be attained through the vācastoma (SSS 15.11.1), rājasūya (ibid.:15.12.1), virāṭ-svārājya (ibid.:14.30.1), and the sarvamedha (SB 13.7.1.1, SSS 16.15.1). These would

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[47] While this was recognised as paśuvrata or animal-like behaviour it was not condemned, nor was its avoidance suggested.

[48] Like the divine adhipatis, divine svarājs were not conceived of as identical with or as protectors of the cult. This contrasts with the position of the virāj and the śreṣṭha.

represent attempts to amalgamate the ideal of svārājya with those of rājya, ādhipatya, and śraiṣṭhya.

In one instance (PVB 25.7.3), a sattra known as the śat-triṁśat saṁvatsara was recommended for the attainment of svārājya. As this literally meant a sacrifice lasting for thirty-six years, it is unlikely that it had any practical significance, and it was in all probability a theoretical, priestly construct. Nevertheless, the fact that svārājya was considered important enough to figure in such abstract speculation is significant and points to the importance of the concept within the dominant brahmanical tradition.[49]

Svārājya was thus characterised by the development of possibilities which were alternatives to, and, to an extent, opposed to those inherent in vairājya. At the same time, the svarāj shared, or gradually acquired, certain features in common with the śreṣṭha and the adhipati, symbolised in the use of variations in the soma sacrifice for purposes of legitimation. If one visualises a situation where śraiṣṭhya, ādhipatya, vairājya, and svārājya typified the attributes expected of the leaders or rulers of distinct communities or groups in contact with one another, it is easy to understand how the attributes of such high-ranking men could be coalesced over a period of time. This was especially likely if the groups in question were stratified, even if specific elements of stratification varied. Hence, as we shall see, although the position of the rājā may have initially been closer to that of the virāj, the definition of rājya, as it evolved over time, shifted away from this possibility and

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[49] However, apart from references to various gods who were conceived of as desiring to acquire svārājya (amongst other things) and "discovering" sacrifices to achieve their ends, there are no detailed myths to explain or justify the origin or existence of the institution.

approximated more closely to that of the svarāj. As a result, the possibility of organising socio-economic relations on an equitable basis gave way to more partisan possibilities, delineated in the context of śraiṣṭhya, and reiterated, with modifications, in the context of ādhipatya and svārājya. This did not, however, involve a simple reiteration of similar concerns through the device of the soma sacrifice or its variations. The resolutions evolved were considerably more complex. Moreover, these were not static, but evidently changed in response to a changing situation. It is on the dynamics of rājya that we will next focus our attention.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RĀJĀ (I): REALM AND RESOURCES

Wealth are rāṣṭras.

Aitareya Brāhmaṇa

I

The emergence of the rājā as virtually the sole legitimate claimant of political power and authority was a gradual and complex process. Both these elements are, to an extent, reflected in the sources available for an analysis of the institution which emerged in the context of those delineated earlier.

According to modern scholars (e.g., IED:s.v.), the noun rājan was derived from the Indo-European root rēĝ, related to the Latin verbal form regere, meaning to direct, guide or rule, reflected in the parallel Sanskrit root rj, with its implications of proceeding in a straight line. While these possibilities were not explicitly abandoned in later definitions, the standard derivation in later Sanskrit literature was based on the verbal root rāj, meaning to shine or rañj meaning to redden or to charm.[1] These etymologies, emphasising the ability to direct or guide, or alternatively to charm or attract, are basically functional.[2] While these functional

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[1] Similarly, in Pali, the term is derived from roots related to the idea of splendour and gladdening others (PED:s.v.).

[2] We are not concerned here with the problem of the grammatical accuracy of such etymologies. What is important for the present purpose is that these derivations were regarded as acceptable by contemporaries, and, as such, reflect a certain understanding of the institution.

descriptions may have implied a certain superiority of the rājā vis-a-vis those who were directed, led, or attracted, it is significant that notions of supremacy were not intrinsic to the definition of rājya. In this sense, rājya presents a contrast to śraiṣṭhya and ādhipatya, in both of which the notion of supremacy was of central importance. As we shall see, attempts to coalesce rājya with the latter two possibilities resulted in a fundamental transformation of the former institution.

This transformation and the concomitant socio-political tensions are dealt with fairly explicitly in the mythical sphere, both through the attribution of rājya to different deities and through the exploration of the relationship between the typical divine rājās and other gods. Initially, in the early Vedic tradition and, to a lesser extent, the later Vedic tradition, the two deities most commonly referred to as rājās were Varuṇa (RV 4.1.2, PVB 24.18.2, AB 1.4.7, SB 2.6.4.3, BSS 2.16, ASS 3.6.24, SSS 5.8.4, ApSS 10.11.1, LSS 3.1.21, PGS 1.5.11, SGS 1.28.15)[3] and Soma (RV 9.97.24, PVB 11.3.9, AB 1.4.9, BSS 7.1, ASS 4.2.18, SSS 7.15.1, LSS 1.10.24, BAU 6.2.9, AGS 1.17.10, PGS 2.6.17, SGS 1.27.7, ADS 1.6.18.23, VDS 1.45).[4] Soma was, in fact, so closely associated with rājya that the term rājā was often used

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[3] Varuṇa was occasionally referred to as an adhipati (SB 8.4.3.13, SSS 6.3.3, PGS 1.5.10), samrāj (RV 2.28.6), and svarāj (ibid.:2.28.1). However, none of these terms was central to his characterisation.

[4] Like Varuṇa, Soma was occasionally referred to as an adhipati (SB 8.4.3.17, PGS 1.5.10) and svarāj (BSS 15.23, ApSS 20.15.5).

as a synomym for the deity, especially in the sacrificial context (e.g., SSS 7.15.1).[5]

The association of two distinct deities with a single institution suggests a certain parallel with śraiṣṭhya, attributed to Indra and Prajāpati. To an extent, this is supported by the relative importance of the two deities. Varuṇa, for instance, evidently crossed the zenith of his importance in the early Vedic tradition (Griswold 1971:87) with only ten hymns of the Ṛg Veda being addressed exclusively to him (Choudhuri 1981:33).[6] Besides, there are no hymns addressed to him in the relatively late tenth maṇḍala. Apart from the paucity of references to Varuṇa, moreover, his conceptualisation underwent changes: "After having been one of the most completely personalised gods of the RV, he is gradually depersonalised and de-ethicised" (Griswold 1971:86).

If the number of hymns addressed to him is any indication, Soma was evidently more popular than Varuṇa in the early Vedic tradition, being preceded only by Indra and Agni.[7] However, Soma was rarely conceived of in anthropomorphic terms, being almost completely identified with the juice-producing plant. As a result, "the divine personality of Soma...is, even for Vedic imagery, of an extremely vague and shadowy character" (Eggeling 1963b:xii).

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[5]Other deities referred to as rājā include Yama (SB 2.3.2.1, BSS 28.1, SSS 4.21.9, ApSS 16.6.4), Āditya (RV 1.20.5), Bṛhaspati (RV 2.30.9), Mitra (ibid.:1.137.1), Agni (ibid.:3.1.18, SB 2.6.4.2), the Ādityas (RV 2.27.1), and the Maruts (ibid.:1.85.8). For references to Indra as rājā, see below.

[6]He was invoked with Mitra in another 23 hymns and with Indra in nine more hymns (ibid.).

[7]Almost all the hymns addressed to Soma (114 out of 122) were compiled together in the ninth maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda (Kapadia 1959: 2), the first eight books containing only three hymns exclusively addressed to him.

Despite these divergences, both Varuṇa and Soma were important deities in the early Vedic tradition (Griswold 1971:87) and both were were possibly of Indo-Iranian, if not Indo-European, origin (Deshmukh 1933:178,214). More important, they shared certain common characteristics, being associated with ṛta, symbolic of the natural, moral, and cosmic order, and satya or truth (Deshmukh 1933:215, Kapadia 1959: 27). Even in the later tradition, the deities were assimilated to one another in the course of the soma sacrifice. For instance, the soma which was exchanged in the course of the sacrifice was described as varuṇya (of varuṇic nature, SB 3.3.4.25) and the seat on which the soma was placed was described as Varuṇa's ṛtasadana (literally the seat or the abode of ṛta, SB 3.3.4.29). Hence, although Varuṇa and Soma were not identical, they were not as dissimilar as Indra and Prajāpati. Thus, the ascription of rājya to the former pair on the divine plane permitted the consolidation of certain values, but did not contain the scope for widening the definition of rājya which was possible in connection with śraiṣṭhya, as noted earlier.

Nevertheless, the scope of rājya was widened. On the mythical plane, this is reflected in what may be described as the indraisation of the institution. While Indra is referred to as a rājā almost throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g., RV 4.19.10, SB 2.6.4.4, SSS 4.21.11), he was not, initially at least, regarded as the typical divine rājā.[8] However, in the post-Vedic popular version of the brahmanical tradition, typified by the epics and the Purāṇas, Indra emerges as the sole divine rājā (Subrahmania Iyer 1930:39).

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[8]This is evident from the fact that references to Indra as rājā are relatively few, given the wealth of data available regarding the deity (Kuiper 1979:25).

The transition was not, however, entirely smooth. As much is evident from the tension characteristic of the Varuṇa-Indra relationship, most explicit in the dialogue attributed to them (RV 4.42) in which each deity supposedly extolled his own virtues.[9] Somewhat less explicit is the hostility between the two as depicted in the legend of Śunaḥśepa (e.g., SSS 15.19.1), where Indra was conceived of as preventing, or a least postponing, the sacrifice of Rohita, Varuṇa's chosen victim (Rau 1973:201).

In the ultimate analysis, it was Indra who was conceived of as victorious. As much is evident from the references to Varuṇa and Sūrya following Indra's vrata (RV 1.101.3) and to the recommended use of mantras referring to Indra as samrāj and Varuṇa as rājā (BSS 17.5, SSS 9.6.21, ApSS 14.3.5, LSS 3.1.21).[10] However, the notions of rājya implicit in the conceptualisation of Varuṇa and Soma were not completely negated. Hence, an analysis of rājya necessitates focusing on the attributes of all three deities and examining how these were ordered, fused, or modified to arrive at a new definition of rulership.

The tension inherent in reconciling different, and often conflicting possibilities was reflected in rituals such as the rājasūya as well. The discovery of the sacrifice, often referred to as the Varuṇa sava (PVB 19.13.1, SB 5.3.4.12) and its initial performance

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[9] It is noteworthy that while Varuṇa was repeatedly referred to (or was conceived of as referring to himself) as a rājā in this context, Indra was associated with exploits such as the killing of Vṛtra, but not with claims to rājya. Nevertheless, Indra's importance was systematically asserted. Kuiper (1979:23) suggests that in this context: "What is at stake is the justness not of Varuṇa's reference to his old rights but of Indra's claims, which he proclaims to Varuṇa and which the poet confirms."

[10] The term samrāj probably indicated the apogee of rājya rather than emperor. Samyak rājate iti samrāṭ.

(e.g., SSS 15.12.1) was attributed to Varuṇa, who was reputed to have imparted its knowledge to Hariścandra (AB 7.33.3). However, in the actual performance of the ritual, attempts were constantly made to equate the yajamāna or the rājā with Indra, as, for instance, in the ratnīnāmhavīṁśi (e.g., BSS 12.5).[11]

While the indraisation of rājya was worked out more or less systematically in rituals which legitimated rājya such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya, these were simultaneously manipulated to incorporate the attributes associated with Prajāpati.[12] This was developed to connect the rājā with a specific form of cosmogonic speculation, which, as noted earlier (Chapter II), served to justify access to and control over productive resources and produce.

Certain features which characterised these rituals are significant--none of them is referred to in the early Vedic tradition.[13] Thus, these were, in a sense, new rituals developed to cope with a new situation. Besides, each of these rituals was complex and composite, pointing to an attempt to weave together a range of customary ritual practices. For instance, the rājasūya included rites specifically associated with the change of status of the rājā such as the abhiṣeka (SB 5.3.4.3) and the mounting of the throne

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[11] At another level, the bow given to the rājā was compared to Indra's vajra or thunderbolt (BSS 12.9).

[12] For instance, the seventeen kinds of waters used for the abhiṣeka during the rājasūya symbolised Prajāpati, who was also associated with that number. The reiteration of the number seventeen during the vājapeya had a similar significance (Gonda 1969:84), while in the case of the aśvamedha, the very horse was equated with Prajāpati (SB 13.1.1.1).

[13] The rājasūya and the vājapeya are not mentioned in the Ṛg Veda (VI:s.v.) while the reference to the aśvamedha in the first maṇḍala is both late and ambiguous. The concept of an abhiṣeka, central to the acquisition of rājya, was also unknown in the Ṛg Veda.

(ibid.:5.4.4.1) as well as rites to ensure the support of important personnel, both human and divine, through the ratnīnām havīṁśi (ibid.: 5.3.1.1) and the devasūhavīṁśi (ibid.:5.3.3.2-12) respectively. It also incorporated rituals suggestive of the physical and mental transformation of the sacrificer such as the dīkṣā or initiation (ibid.:5.3.5.19) and the final ceremonial cutting of his hair (ibid.: 5.5.3.2). Besides, rituals symbolic of an assertion of economic control such as the mock cattle raid (ibid.:5.4.3.1) and the game of dice (ibid.:5.4.4.6) were also assimilated, as were more general rites meant to ensure well-being and prosperity such as the cāturmāsyas (ibid.:5.2.3.10) or four-monthly sacrifices associated with the agricultural cycle, and a specific variant of the soma sacrifice known as the daśapeya (ibid.:5.4.5.4). It was in fact "an encyclopaedic conglomerate of royal rites" (Heesterman 1957:225), "One of these śrauta sacrifices in which royal rites and cults, probably of diverse origin, were preserved" (ibid.:4). Both the provision for such varied, composite rituals, and their ultimate supersession by alternative means of legitimating and enforcing claims to rājya provide us with a wealth of information on the institution.

As important is the existence of references to specific human rājās. These include lists of rājās who performed sacrifices such as the rājasūya (AB 7.35.8), aśvamedha (SB 13.5.4.1-22, SSS 16.8.27), and aindramahābhiṣeka (AB 8.39.7-9).[14] What is significant is that such lists were evidently deliberately produced and preserved

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[14] Apart from specific rājās, those belonging to the Kuru-Pañcālas were regarded as typical performers of the rājasūya (SB 5.5.2.5) and the former were ideal performers of the vājapeya as well (SSS 15.3.17).

within the brahmanical tradition, presenting a contrast with the treatment of incumbents of other positions discussed earlier. In other words, rājās were accorded a recognition denied to others, especially if they were able to establish and legitimate their claims to status through the performance of complex rituals.

Apart from stereotyped lists, specific rājās are referred to in legends incorporated within the tradition to underscore important issues and their resolutions. Such legends are particularly valuable, indicating as they do that some of the actions of rājās were fairly well-known and were used as points of reference. Besides, as in the case of the positions referred to earlier, there are incidental references to the conduct of rājās in general. These form parts of similes and analogies and in all likelihood reflect common perceptions of the rājā and his functions. Thus, while we are not in a position to reconstruct the history of any individual rājā, the development of the institution of rājya is more amenable to analysis.

Here we will explore the changing spheres of influence associated with the rājā (Section II), the association of divine and human rājās with cosmogonic speculation and its significance (Section III), which will be extended to an analysis of the relationship of the rājā to productive and procreative resources (Section IV). This will be followed by an examination of the links between rājya and distributive networks and their implications (Section V).

II

The changes implicit in the range of sources available for an analysis of rājya are evident when one examines specific facets of the institution, such as the units or categories in terms of which it was defined. Here, as we shall see, there is a shift from definitions in terms of a relatively undifferentiated category, implying the unity and near identity between the rājā and those who depended on him, to definitions which envisaged the existence of a complex, differentiated socio-political order.

The typical divine rājās were envisaged as exercising control over groups to which they intrinsically belonged, with Varuṇa being conceived of as the rājā of the devas (RV 4.42.1, SB 12.8.3.10) and of the Ādityas (SSS 4.21.10). His association with the latter was particularly close, as they were regarded as his brothers, born from the common mother Aditi.[15] Soma, likewise, was an oṣadhi or plant who was the rājā of other plants (PVB 11.3.9).

The evidence relating to some of the other, less typical divine rājās also conforms to this pattern. Yama, for instance, was regarded as the rājā of the pitṛs (SSS 4.21.9). This was in a sense logical, as he was believed to be the first man to die and transcend death, and as such, would have been the first of the deceased patrilineal ancestors. Prajāpati, likewise, was regarded as the rājā of the Viśvedevas or all gods (SSS 4.21.12).

Definitions in terms of similar categories were reiterated in the human context as well. For instance, the man who obtained a

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[15] Varuṇa was occasionally identified with the saṁvatsara (e.g., SB 4.1.4.10) but this was not a typical attribute of the deity and may have been added on to facilitate an identification between him and Prajāpati.

rāṣṭra was regarded as a vasiṣṭha[16] amongst samānas or equals (BSS 14.17). Elsewhere (ibid.:18.40) an analogy was drawn between the rājā and the ṛṣabha or bull amongst animals, once again implying a basic commonality between the rājā and those over whom he exercised control.[17]

At another level, specific rājās were identified as belonging to named people virtually throughout the brahmanical tradition. These included Ṛṇaṁcaya, who was described as the rājā of the Ruṣamas, (RV 5.30.14), Para Āṭnāra, a Kauśalya rājā (SB 13.5.4.4), Balhika Prātīpiya, a Kauravya rājā (ibid.:12.9.3.3), and Hariścandra, the Aikṣvāka rājā (SSS 15.17.1).[18] As an extension of this, the rāṣṭra[19] or the realm of the rājā was also defined in terms of the people comprising it, with the Kurus and the Śṛñjayas being referred to as two rāṣṭras (SB 2.4.4.5).[20] Such definitions were, moreover, legitimised through rituals such as the rājasūya (e.g., BSS 12.9) and the aśvamedha (ApSS 20.4.3), where the sacrificer was proclaimed as the rājā of the viś.

However, the distance between the rājā and the viś was steadily increasing on the one hand, and the viś itself was tending to become

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[16] Most excellent, best, richest (SED:s.v.).

[17] A similar understanding is apparent in the description of the nine-versed stoma or hymn as the rāja amongst stomas (PVB 21.5.9).

[18] Others similarly identified include Purukutsa, an Aikṣvāka rājā (SB 13.5.4.5), Kraivya, a Pāñcāla rājā (ibid.:13.5.4.7), Dhvasran Dvaitavana, the rājā of the Matsyas (ibid.:13.5.4.9), Śatānīka Śātrajit, the rājā of the Bharatas (ibid.:13.5.4.19-21), Pururavas, an Aiḍa rājā (BSS 18.44), Śunaskarṇa, the Śaibya rājā (ibid.:18.48).

[19] Rāṣṭra was in all likelihood "used more in the sense of realm, sphere of authority" (Thapar 1984:34) as opposed to territory.

[20] Similarly, a rājā named Dustaritu Pauṁsāyana was restored to the rāṣṭra of the Śṛñjayas (SB 12.9.3.13).

more and more differentiated.[21] As a result, other definitions of rājya were evolved, envisaging distinctions between the rājā and his people, reflected in the conceptualisation of deities exercising rājya over human beings--Agni, for instance, was regarded as the rājā of the viś (RV 2.2.8), while Soma figured as the rājā of both gods and mortals (ibid.:9.97.24).[22]

On the human plane, the tendency to assert control over more than one category of people is evident in the context of the rājasūya in particular, where alternative ritual formulae were probably devise to cope with a changing situation, with provisions for proclaiming the yajamāna as the rājā of the Kurus, or the Pañcālas, or the Kuru-Pañcālas, or of the janatā (i.e., the people at large, ApSS 18.12.7).[23] As we shall see, the very process whereby the rājā asserted his authority over more than one category of people brought such categories into contact with one another, and at the same time enhanced the importance and power of the rājā as a mediator between different social groups.

As opposed to definitions in terms of people, which tended to become more comprehensive, the associations of rājya with specifically delimited territory were rather weak. Occasionally, divine rājās were associated with the control of spatial categories; for example,

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[21] The first process will be examined in the next chapter, while we will focus on the second process in Chapter VII.

[22] At a different level, a similar widening of the definition of rājya is evident in philosophical speculation, where the ātman or the supreme soul was referred to as bhūtānām rājā or the lord of creatures in the course of a simile (BAU 2.1.15).

[23] The provision for anointing the sacrificer for rājya over numerous people (mahate janānām rājyāya, SB 5.3.3.12) would also have had similar implications.

Varuṇa was characterised as the rājā of earth and heaven (RV 1.25.20), while Soma was regarded as the rājā of the entire earth (Deshmukh 1933:281).[24] However, such attributes were not typical of either deity.

In the human context, an assertion of control over spatial categories is implicit in the rājasūya, where the rājā was referred to as one who had conquered all directions (ApSS 18.19.5). Such a definition, by its very vagueness, would have permitted an extension of the sphere of influence of the rājā.[25]

What is significant about the definition of rājya on the human plane is the tendency to incorporate more and more people within its scope, as well as to extend the spheres of influence of the rājā. Moreover, although the rājā was thought to be endowed with material resources, and attempted to acquire them, rājya was not defined in terms of control over such resources. In other words, definitions of rājya emphasised the connection between the rājā and his people rather than between the rājā and material resources. However, as the relationship between the rājā and his people changed--both in terms of the number of people with whom connections were envisaged and in terms of the social categories involved in such networks, a different

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[24] Indra was also regarded as the samrāj of the earth and heaven (RV 1.100.1), while Agni was conceived of as the rājā of the worlds (ibid.:1.98.1).

[25] The notion of the janapada evidently crystallised over a period of time. This is suggested by the equation between the janapada and the body (BAU 2.1.18) in a simile. Such an equation would have been valid only if the janapada had fairly well-defined boundaries. The simile states that just as a mahārājā might keep his jānapadas within his own janapada, so does the puruṣa within the body keep the senses within it during sleep.

approach towards material resources emerged. This shift, which we will examine below, was at once a response to what may be characterised as changes in the people or the vís, and at the same time reinforced the very changes which were taking place in the economy and in society.

III

The shift in the relationship of the rāja to ecomomic resources is reflected at a number of levels. To start with, in cosmogonic speculation, which provides, as we have seen, an index of claims to determining and ensuring the pre-conditions of material well-being, we can observe a striking contrast between the position of the typical divine rājās and that of their human counterparts.

Varuṇa's creative activities, which are referred to incidentally in the early Vedic tradition, were, in some ways, reminiscent of Indra's. He was credited with establishing the heaven and earth with Mitra's assistance (RV 5.62.3), besides placing the sun in the sky (ibid.:5.63.7) and regulating the course of the moon and stars (ibid.:1.24.10). At another level, he was conceived of as providing human beings with the crucial elements of fire and water (ibid.: 5.85.2, 2.28.4, 5.62.3),[26] and ensured that the basic productive resources, plants and cows, flourished (ibid.). Besides, he was supposed to have placed soma on the rock or mountain (ibid.:5.85.2), thus implicitly making it accessible to mortals, and was associated, along with Mitra, with the creation of the basic temporal units of the year, month, and day (śarat, māsa, and aha respectively) as well as with the creation of the sacrifice and the chants or ṛcas (ibid.: 7.66.11). What is significant is that Varuṇa's rcle in creation was thought to ensure the manifestation of the physical or natural phenomena which provided the tangible basis for human existence, as well as the basic ingredients of sacral activities. In other words, Varuṇa's role was comparable to the all-encompassing scope of Prajāpati's cosmogonic activities referred to earlier.

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[26] Water was provided as rain and in the form of flowing rivers.

However, the means whereby Varuṇa was conceived as fulfilling his role were distinctive-- as "the possessor or wielder of that incomprehensible creative power or faculty to achieve the marvellous which was known as māyā" (Gonda 1959:114). The attributes of māyā which were focused on in the later brahmanical tradition included an ability to be used for good and evil,[27] while still later, it was conceived of as the cause of what was viewed as the illusion of worldly existence.

While the connotations of māyā are clearly complex, the shifts in meaning which the term undergoes over time can be broadly (if somewhat simplistically) summarised as one from an exalted, positive sense, to a more ambiguous meaning, to a negative sense, within at least some of the most important post-Vedic philosophical traditions. We would suggest that part of the explanation for this semantic change may lie in the association of Varuṇa with māyā, and in the tendency to relegate the values conceptualised in connection with the deity to a subordinate position.[28] As such, references to Varuṇa's cosmogonic activities are virtually absent in the later brahmanical tradition, and, not surprisingly, the human rājā was not envisaged as ensuring material well-being through māyā, although he was expected to do so through other means, as we shall see.

The other divine rājā, Soma, was, like Varuṇa, associated with the material aspects of creation. In the early Vedic context, for instance, Soma was envisaged as masculine, laying the garbha or embryo in Aditi, from which offspring were produced for human beings

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[27] Gonda (1965:167) elucidates this by pointing out that: "If power is put into practice by those beings who are active for man's interests it is good and useful, if it is wielded by enemies or malignant beings, it is considered evil, deceitful and pernicious."

[28] Further examples of this process are noted below and in Chapters V and VI.

(RV 9.74.5).[29] This implied a recognition of the physical process of heterosexual intercourse as procreative, which, as noted earlier (Chapter II) was marginalised in the later brahmanical tradition.

At the same time, the bringing of Soma was frequently referred to in both the early and the later Vedic tradition (e.g., RV 4.27.1-5, 3.43.7). The notion of the dependence of the deity, implicit in this conceptualisation, would have made him particularly unfit for the role of supreme creator.

Cosmogonies in the later Vedic tradition located Soma within the sacrificial framework. In one instance (BAU 6.2.9), Soma was thought to be produced from the oblations offered by the devas, Soma, when offered, produced rain, rain produced food, food produced semen, and semen men.[30] In other words, Soma was conceived of as instrumental in the creative process[31] but was not envisaged as the first cause or as the creator. Besides, while the earlier association with the physical aspects of creation were reiterated, the basic means of creation envisaged were explicitly sacrificial, pushing the notion of procreative intercourse into the background.

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[29] Soma was occasionally conceived of as causing the sun to shine (RV 6.44.23), generating the two worlds (ibid.:6.44.24), and supporting the heavens (ibid.:9.66.17). As Deshmukh (1933:286) suggests, these achievements may have been attributed to him owing to his close association with Indra, and were probably not intrinsic to the deity.

[30] According to Gonda (1965:47) Soma's kingship rested on this identification with generative forces.

[31] The instrumentality of Soma vis-a-vis the creative process was probably implicit in the early Vedic tradition as well, if one accepts the interpretation (e.g., Kuiper 1983:11-12) of the Indra-Vrtra struggle as a cosmogonic myth. In a number of instances, "Soma stimulates Indra to perform great cosmic actions and exhilarates him to carry out his warlike deeds (Deshmukh 1933:246).

It was this notion of the sacrifice as creative which was elaborated in connection with the human rājā.[32] This was achieved in the ritual context through the development of equations between Prajāpati and the yajamāna, examples of which have been noted earlier. Such equations were established through the three major rituals connected with the legitimation of rājya, viz., the rājasūya, vājapeya, and aśvamedha, although the specific form varied. Thus, the rājasūya was regarded as one of the sacrifices used by Prajāpati for his creative activities (SB 5.3.3.15), implying that the yajamāna, following in Prajāpati's footsteps, was responsible for creation. The vājapeya, apart from being connected with Prajāpati through the constant use of his characteristic number, seventeen, was envisaged as a means of attaining this loka or world and others as well (SB 5.1.5.1, 5.2.1.5).[33] The aśvamedha was a means of obtaining the saṁvatsara or year (SB 13.1.2.1), the cosmogonic implications of which have been referred to earlier. Besides, the horse was regarded as symbolic of the eye of Prajāpati (PVB 21.4.2) which was restored through the sacrifice,[34] this implying the restoration of the pristine cosmic order associated with the god.

The notion of the restoration or regeneration of the cosmic order and its consequent material and social benefits was worked out through specific components of these rituals. For instance, in the

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[32] The implications of conceiving of the sacrifice as a creative device have been referred to earlier (Chapter II).

[33] On the other hand the PVB (18.7.9) describes the race which formed part of the vājapeya as a means of attaining svargaloka or heaven.

[34] In this context, the sacrificer was thought to make Prajāpati whole--Prajāpatiṁ sarvaṁ karoti. A similar idea is expressed in the SB (13.4.4.11). Elsewhere (ibid.:13.1.1.4) the aśvamedha was conceived of as produced by Prajāpati.

rājasūya, the āgrāyaneṣṭi or the offering of first fruits, part of the cāturmāsyas, was viewed as a means of ensuring that plants were anamīva and akilbiṣa (SB 5.2.3.9, healthy and faultless, Eggeling 1963c:46).[35] As this suggests, particular elements of material well-being were identified as goals of sacrifices, with cattle being supposedly endowed with milk, oxen with strength, and horses with speed through the performance of the aśvamedha (SB 13.1.9.3-5). Moreover, animals were viewed as being placed in their proper environment, whether domesticated or wild, riverine or mountainous (BSS 15.16) as a result of the sacrifice.[36] The performance of the vājapeya, on the other hand, was thought to ensure kṛṣi, kṣema, rayi and poṣa (SB 5.2.1.25, i.e., agriculture, prosperity, wealth, and nourishment). More generally, the rājya, thus sanctified, was defined in terms of anna and paśu (ibid.:8.6.2.11). The notion of the rājā ensuring general well-being was implicit in the non-ritual context as well, as is evident in the statement (GDS 8.2) that four types of beings, viz., trees, creatures that move with the help of their feet, winged creatures, and those that creep, depend on the rājā.

The role assigned to the human rājā in cosmogonic speculation marks a break with the traditions of the divine rājās in a number of

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[35] According to Heesterman (1957:29) the cāturmāsyas in the rājasūya were: "a ritual evocation of the universal process of maturing and birth in the vegetable, animal and human spheres through the year." Besides, the keśavapaniya or the cutting of the hair of the sacrificer probably had a similar significance: "The year-long growth of his hair stands for plant growth and ripening of the crops, the cutting of his hair at the end of the year-long ripening process makes the universe fit again for a new productive cycle" (ibid.:217).

[36] Besides, the incorporation of the soma sacrifice in the vājapeya (SB 5.1.3.1) and in the form of the dasapeya in the rājasūya (ibid.:5.4.5.4-19) meant a reiteration of the cosmogonic elements which characterised this basic ritual.

respects. The relatively limited or undeveloped traditions associated with Varuṇa and Soma were replaced by the systematic, all-encompassing possibilities associated with Prajāpati. This meant that the rājā claimed to be able to ensure general well-being and prosperity, and aspired to a virtually all-pervasive influence.

At another level, such claims were reiterated in the sacrificial context. The implications of the use of the sacrifice as a creative device have been referred to earlier. What is also noteworthy is that, in the process of ritualising the understanding of creation, certain other possibilities were abandoned. These included the notion of creation as a mystery, evident in its association with māyā, which was increasingly viewed in negative terms, as mentioned earlier. While conceiving of creation as the outcome of a sacrifice made it, at a certain level, comprehensible, it meant that a domain which was previously inaccessible to all was now conceived of as accessible to a privileged few. We have seen that access to such rituals was restricted, and, as such, many men and all women would have been denied participation in what were conceived of as cosmogonic functions, this in turn providing a basis for social differentiation.

The consequences of the treatment accorded to the possibilities associated with Soma were also somewhat similar. This may seem paradoxical, given the fact that Soma's creative activity, conceived in terms of procreative intercourse, could be "understood", unlike Varuṇa's use of māyā. However, owing to its simple, striking, human analogy, it could be understood by all. What both concepts possessed was a certain universality--if Varuṇa's māyā was universally incomprehensible, Soma's act was universally understood. Hence knowledge or the lack of knowledge of either possibility could not provide the

basis for socio-political or ritual differentiation. It is this which probably explains the fact that neither of these possibilities were incorporated within the later definition of rājya--while Soma was accorded a role in rituals, this was, as we have seen, instrumental rather than causal.

The role assigned to the human rājā vis-a-vis cosmogonic knowledge and activity thus distanced him from his divine counterparts At the same time, the process distanced him from most people as well--he was thought to ensure general well-being through ritual activities which were regarded both as an exclusive privilege and as a duty. Hence the rājā could, and probably did, claim exemption from participation in the actual process of production, as he was thought to ensure its success by sustaining the cosmic order. At the same time, the widespread benefits which were thought to ensue from the performance of such rituals would have ensured popular support for their performance. As we shall see (Section V), the appropriation and distribution of resources through such rituals probably sharpened the socio-economic processes which were at work. The shift in the cosmogonic roles of the divine and human rājās thus both reflected and contributed to far-reaching changes.

IV

The changing relationship between the rājā and his people, implicit in the assumption of a distinct cosmogonic role by the former, is also evident when one turns to the issue of control over produce or productive resources.

Both the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, were conceived of as prosperous, with the former being occasionally referred to as viśvavedasa, literally the possessor of everything (RV 5.67.3).[37] He was also associated with ṛddhi or prosperity (PVB 24.18.8,9), supposedly conferring this on the Vrātyas who conformed to the sacrificial norms laid down by him. More specifically, Varuṇa was associated with grain, especially barley (e.g., SB 2.5.2.1, SSS 14.7.1)[38] and with cultivated plants in general (SB 5.3.3.8) and, to a lesser extent, with cattle (e.g., RV 5.69.2). In this sense, Varuṇa's position was closer to that of the virāj associated with anna and contrasted with that of the śreṣṭha, adhipati, and svarāj, who were more closely associated with paśu. However, unlike the virāj, Varuṇa's connection with wealth was not one of identification or instrumentality. As important, the association with wealth was not one of his typical attributes.

This was, in a sense, more characteristic of the other divine rājā, Soma, who was conceived of as rayipati or lord of wealth (RV 2.40.6). Besides, plants or oṣadhis were also described as saumya i.e., of or belonging to Soma (SB 7.2.4.26), who was associated

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[37] In this context, he was thought to share the epithet with Mitra and Aryaman, fellow Ādityas.

[38] This connection was reiterated in the rājasūya, where the offering to Varuṇa was prepared from barley (BSS 12.3, ApSS 18.10.10).

with cattle and the waters as well (RV 1.93.2,5, SB 12.7.2.2).[39] If such attributes suggest a degree of control over productive resources, reminiscent of Indra's, other associations were analogous to those of Prajāpati and the virāj. This is most explicit in the identification established between Soma and anna or food in general (e.g., PVB 6.6.1, SB 7.2.2.11), and with devānām anna or the food of the gods in particular (SB 11.1.3.3), as well as with prāṇa or the vital life force (ibid.:7.3.1.2). Elsewhere (BSS 14.4), such an equation is implied in the notion that the accidental spilling and hence defiling or destruction of soma would lead to the destruction of the prajā and paśu of the sacrificer. This identification meant that Soma's relationship to wealth could not be reduced to an appropriative one.

The association with wealth envisaged for the divine rājās evidently proved inadequate for their human counterparts. This is apparent from the fact that, as in the case of the śreṣṭha, adhipati, and svarāj, the rituals which legitimated rājya were conceived of as a means of acquiring access to produce and productive resources. We had suggested earlier that this may have been a means of legitimating individual claims to what were customarily regarded as collective resources. In the case of the rājā, however, such rituals were, at the same time, actual occasions for obtaining resources.[40]

The material benefits which were thought to accrue from the performance of such sacrifices included annādya or the ability to eat, which was supposedly acquired through the rājasūya (AB 7.35.6) and

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[39] In one instance (RV8.1.2) Soma is described as the rājā of rivers. The less typical divine rājās such as Agni were also occasionally described as the rājās of all the vasu (wealth) in hills, waters, plants, and mankind (ibid.:1.59.3).

[40] The process is discussed in the next section.

the vājapeya (PVB 18.6.8, SSS 15.1.2). The latter sacrifice was, in fact, equated with anna and peya (food and drink, SB 5.1.3.3, SSS 15.1.4-6),[41] while the aśvamedha was regarded as a means of acquiring anna from the four quarters (SB 13.1.1.4). All three rituals, were, moreover, envisaged as means of acquiring paśu (PVB 18.7.3-4, SB 13.1.2.3, ApSS 18.10.6). Occasionally, moreover, claims to resources were widened, as is evident from the view (BSS 15.5), that the aśvamedha was a means of obtaining the cow, horse, goat, sheep, rice, barley, beans, sesamum, gold, and serving men in particular, and wealth, nourishment, prosperity, and all wealth in general. These claims were more specific than those envisaged for the śreṣṭha or the adhipati, who generally attempted to assert control over the acquisitic of anna and paśu (food and animals or cattle) in general.

It is also significant that there is evidence for a debate on the control over the earth by rājās which has no parallel in either the mythical context or in the context of the other positions of status referred to earlier. This was obviously an issue which was acquiring significance in a changing socio-economic situation. What is also noteworthy is that the story of Viśvakarman Bhauvana, the rājā in question, occurs fairly often in the brahmanical tradition (e.g., AB 8.39.7, SB 13.7.1.15, SSS 16.15.3), suggesting that the reiteration of the problem and its resolution was regarded as important. According to the story, Viśvakarman Bhauvana gave away the entire earth as dakṣiṇā after performing the aindramahā-bhiṣeka and the aśvamedha. At this, the earth threatened to dive

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[41] The BSS (11.12) incorporated a prayer for anna, annādya, and vāja (food, the ability to eat, and strength or vigour respectively) in the ritual.

into the ocean in protest. Needless to say, the rājā, faced with such dire consequences, expressed his generosity otherwise.[42]

The manner in which the problem was posed is in itself revealing--the question was not explicitly framed in terms of claims to ownership but was expressed in terms of the right or otherwise to give. A similar definition underlay the more general discussion on the granting of land (presumably limited areas, SB 7.1.1.4), which was resolved by stating that the consent of the viś was required by the kṣatriya who wished to make such a gift.

The definition of ownership in terms of generosity rather than in terms of absolute claims to exploit or enjoy resources probably reflects an attempt to conceptualise a changing economic relationship in terms of existing categories of analysis, and the inherent contradictions of the process, examples of which have been noted earlier. As we shall see, definitions and criteria of generosity were in themselves subject to change, becoming more and more socially differentiated. Ultimately, the later brahmanical tradition, as embodied in the Dharma Sūtras, reflects a situation where the rājā's absolute claims to ownership, untrammelled by notions of generosity, were well-nigh total, exemplified by the recognition of claims to treasure trove (GDS 10.35, VDS 3.13)[43] and to svam (literally one's own) or property of a man who died without recognised heirs (e.g., ADS 2.6.14.5, GDS 28.43,

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[42] The resolution envisaged in the Rāmāyaṇa (RAM 1.13, 38, 40) is different. Here, Rājā Daśaratha was conceived of as giving the dharā or earth, but the priests return this as they feel they lack the strength to protect the bhūmi or land. Similarly, Vyāsa, after Yudhiṣṭhira's aśvamedha, was conceived of as refusing to receive the earth as dakṣiṇā (MBH 14.91.7,8). It is likely that the epics reflect a later situation, in which the earth was viewed as an object rather than as a subject.

[43] The actual finder was occasionally rewarded with a share. However, if the finder was a brāhmaṇa, he could retain the entire treasure (VDS 3.14).

BDS 1.10.18.16, VDS 17.83).[44] Both these claims implied a specific assertion of control--in the first case over the entire land of the realm, and in the second over the people who inhabited it.

That such claims were only gradually established is suggested by incidental references which describe a typical rājā as the rājā of a vis', with many horses, goats, sheep, rice, barley, beans, sesamum, gold, elephants, and serving men (ApSS 20.4.3).[45] This broadly corresponds with the resources which were thought to be acquired through the aśvamedha, referred to above. The absence of any reference to land would indicate that it was not as yet systematically claimed as part of the wealth of the rājā.

It is evident that the control of resources was more important for the human rājā than for his divine counterparts, his position contrasting in particular with that of Soma. If the notion of rājya typified by Varuṇa and Soma represented an earlier situation, it is apparent that the later Vedic rājā, while still being identified with these divinities and the presumably prestigious traditions associated with them, was, at the same time, attempting to define rājya on a different, more material basis. This was achieved and legitimised through new, composite rituals. Simultaneously, efforts were made to extend the definition of such resources by elaborating on the types of animals or grains to which the rājā claimed access. The increased specificity in the human context was

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[44] The only exception was in the case of the property of brāhmaṇas (BDS 1.5.11.13, VDS 17.84, GDS 28.42,43) which was ideally divided amongst members of the same varṇa. Protecting the property of the brāhmaṇa was recognised as the supreme duty of the rājā, who was assured of attaining the merit of a supreme sacrifice if he died defending the property of a brāhmaṇa (ADS 2.10.26.2).

[45] Elsewhere (SB 9.3.3.11), the typical human rājā is described as an adhipati of paśus.

probably related to the tendency to extend the sphere of influence of the rājā--if different areas were associated with different produce, or if different social categories produced or controlled different goods, the forging of ties of exchange with such groups or areas would have necessitated the framing of the demands of the rājā in terms of specific resources. It was probably only at a later stage that the demands of the rājā were expressed in more universalistic terms, as a fixed share of the produce, irrespective of its specific nature.[46]

Turning to procreation, which was, as we have noted before, an integral part of definitions of material well-being, it is not surprising to find that both the typical divine rājās were invoked for the purpose. What is remarkable, however, is the association of Varuṇa with the female, into whom Mitra (PVB 25.10.10) and Indra (SB 12.9.1.17) were conceived of as pouring retas or semen. What was envisaged through such conceptualisations was probably a continuum between the poles of masculinity and femininity, with the less masculine being defined as feminine vis-a-vis the more masculine. The fact that Varuṇa was conceived of as less masculine would also suggest that the definition of rājya associated with him was closer to that of vairājya than svārājya (Chapter III). It is likely that this explains his marginalisation within the brahmanical tradition and his supersession by Indra in a society where gender stratification was sharpening.[47]

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[46] For details of the emergence of a system of tribute or taxation centring around the rājā, see Chapter VI.

[47] Varuṇa's association with the waters is also significant in this context, the latter being regarded as a typical feminine element. According to M.Ghosh (1959:286), this association is suggested by the very name of the god.

It is also likely that Varuṇa's role in procreation was viewed as ambiguous on account of these associations. Hence, although he was invoked for progeny in general (e.g., RV 5.69.3, SGS 1.17.9, PGS 1.9.5) and sons in particular (e.g., AB 7.33.2, where he was conceived of as conferring a son on Hariścandra, and SGS 1.5.11), the outcome was occasionally viewed as uncertain. This is particularly obvious in the legend of Śunaḥśepa, where Hariścandra was thought to obtain a son, Rohita, from Varuṇa, on condition that he would sacrifice him to the god. Similarly, the deity was occasionally invoked to prevent childlessness, rather than to positively grant children (PGS 1.5.11).

A similar tension vis-a-vis procreation and its outcome is reflected in the myth of Varuṇa and Prajāpati which "explained" the performance of the varuṇapraghāsa (SB 2.5.2.22-23). In this context, Varuṇa was supposed to have seized the prajā, leaving them with nothing except their breaths. Ultimately, Prajāpati freed them from Varuṇa's grasp by performing this sacrifice. While such a ritual was probably explicable in terms of the uncertainties surrounding the process of birth, its specific form meant that the transfer of control of prajā from Varuṇa to Prajāpati was viewed as beneficial. Given the distinctive attributes associated with each deity, this legitimated a more masculine understanding of procreative processes, and at the same time condemned the alternative, less differentiated understanding as potentially dangerous.

Soma, unlike Varuṇa, was consistently envisaged as masculine, the fluid being identified with semen (SB 3.8.5.2). This is broadly consistent with his role in cosmogonies, referred to earlier (Section III). He was, moreover, conceived of as the first husband of all women (e.g., RV 10.85.40).

As may be expected from what was regarded as the legitimate understanding of cosmogonic processes, the human rājā did not directly imitate his divine counterparts. Nevertheless, the notion of procreation runs through the rituals which legitimated rājya as a recurrent theme. The very name rājasūya, for instance, indicates a derivation from the root su, which could be conjugated as sunoti, meaning to press (the soma plant), suvate, meaning to impel or consecrate, and sūte, meaning to procreate (Heesterman 1957:72). This could imply both a general regeneration, as well as the birth of the rājā (Coomaraswamy 1978:9),[48] which was specifically ensured through the dīkṣā (SB 5.3.5.19) which formed part of the aśvamedha (ibid.:13.1.7.1-4) as well.[49] Besides, the ritual was thought to ensure the birth of prajā (e.g., SB 5.2.4.1)[50] and sons (AB 7.33.6, ApSS 18.17.11). The last was thought to be achieved through the recitation of the Śunaḥśepa legend. Both the recitation, regarded as potentially generative, and the procedures for acquiring sons envisaged in the legend, were non-physical. In the legend, Hariścandra was thought to have obtained a son by praying to Varuṇa, while Viśvāmitra acquired Śunaḥśepa in a ritual context. If anything, this suggested that the rājā, himself "born" supernaturally in the ritual context, could acquire sons through similar means without being involved in the physical process of procreation.

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[48] In this context he suggests that the priests acted as the father of the sacrificer.

[49] Here, the dīkṣā was envisaged as a means of acquiring kṣatra ādhipatya, and svārājya. For the general significance of the dīkṣā or rebirth in the ritual context, see Chapter II.

[50] A prayer for prajā formed part of the vājapeya as well (ApSS 18.5.15).

This disjuncture between the rājā and physicality was even more explicit in the context of the aśvamedha which involved sexual intercourse between the mahiṣī or chief wife of the rājā and the slaughtered horse (ASS 10.8.9, SSS 16.3.33) as a means of ensuring procreation (prajanana).[51] At the same time, it was recognised that the rājā, who refrained from sexual intercourse (SSS 16.1.8,9) would benefit from the participation of his wives in the ritual, the former being restored to tejas, indriya, paśu, and śrī (lustre, strength, animals, and prosperity respectively, SB 13.2.6.7). Thus, the rājā was viewed as manipulating the instruments of procreation and ensuring generation without actually participating in the process.

The process itself was conceptualised as rather violent. This is evident from the use of the āhanasya or "obscene"verses, replete with sexual allusions, while the intercourse was taking place. As Parpola (1986:48) points out, the word is derived from the verb ā+han, "which in the āhanasya has the erotic meaning of "beating" the female with the penis" (ibid.). According to Gonda (1969:114), the horse itself was symbolic of the generative power of the rājā which was spread through the realm through which it passed. What is significant in this context is that the horse, like the rājā, was expected to abstain from sexual intercourse.

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[51] The centrality of this episode to the sacrifice is evident from its depiction on the commemorative coins of Samudragupta and Kumāragupta I (Altekar 1957:66, Chhabra 1986:xxv,xxxi). The description of Daśaratha's aśvamedha also conforms to the prescriptions of the later Vedic tradition, with Daśaratha deciding to perform the sacrifice in order to obtain a son (Ram 1.8.2) and Kausalyā cohabiting with the animal (ibid.:1.13.27) which was approached by the other wives as well (ibid.:1.13.28).

The ritualisation of procreation in the context of rājya, while including the use of symbolic mithunas as in the case of the soma sacrifice and its variants which legitimated śraiṣṭhya, ādhipatya, and svārājya, occasionally extended beyond this. This is evident, on the one hand, in the aśvamedha, where the procreative pair of the mahiṣī and the sacrificial horse carried the symbolism of the mithuna to near-realistic levels, and in the rājasūya on the other, where the use of the Śunaḥśepa legend eschewed the use of even symbolic mithunas. The use of such a range of divergent possibilities may have been a means of extending the influence of the rājā who probably aspired to acquire the support of different groups of people by adopting (and adapting) a variety of ritual practices.

As in the case of cosmogonic speculation and access to material resources, the position of the human rājā vis-a-vis procreation was substantially different from that of his divine counterparts. While the rājā was masculine, the procreative mechanisms envisaged for him did not involve the physical act, as in the case of Varuṇa or Soma--he was, somewhat like Prajāpati, conceived of as above physicality. In this sense, this notion of procreation, like that of creation, sanctified through rituals, distanced the rājā from the people in general, and women in particular. At the same time, as in the case of productive resources, the rājā was regarded as ensuring the very basis of procreation (e.g., GDS 8.3). Nevertheless, the context for procreation which was thus provided and legitimised, reinforced inequalities between the men and women involved in it.[52]

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[52]For a detailed analysis of the gender hierarchy in the context of rājya, see Chapters V and VIII.

The structuring of creation and procreation were not the only areas in which the actions of the human rājā reinforced processes of socio-political differentiation. As important was the changing pattern of distribution of productive resources and produce associated with the rājā.[53]

Distribution was not a typical function of the divine rājā Varuṇa. Prayers to him for wealth are rare, and it is evident that generosity, conditional or unconditional, was not amongst his distinguishing features. If this reflects possibilities in the human context, it would indicate that controlling or disbursing resources may not have been amongst the central functions expected of the rājā, especially in the early Vedic situation.

The attributes of the other divine rājā, Soma, were also somewhat unique. While Soma could be invoked both by the paśukāma and by those desirous of anna (BAU 2.1.3), and the soma sacrifice was a means of attaining both, as noted earlier, Soma was not only identified with what was distributed, but was thought to be destroyed or dispersed in the very process of distribution. This is evident from the characterisation of Soma as devānām anna (SB 11.1.3.3) or the food of the gods, who was killed (SB 11.1.2.1), presumably to serve as food for his fellow gods, in spite of being a deva himself. This conception is somewhat similar to that of the virāj, referred to earlier, and contrasts sharply with that of the human rājā,

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[53] While some of the means whereby the rājā acquired such resources are discussed in the present section, others will be examined in Chapter VI. Broadly, we will distinguish between the resources acquired in the sacrificial context, and those acquired through other means, focusing here on the former.

who was conceived of as eating his people, especially in the later Vedic tradition.[54]

Unlike his divine counterpart, moreover, the human rājā was conceived of as both receiving and giving produce (including what may be regarded as luxury goods) and productive resources, and evidently aspired to control and manipulate a range of distributive mechanisms. This is apparent from the data pertaining to the rituals which legitimated rājya. As we shall see, the changes introduced in the distributive network as a result of the intervention of the rājā and the legitimation of such interventions contained the potential for transforming the social and economic relationships which were regulated through such exchanges.

One of the most striking features of the rituals which legitimated rājya during the later Vedic phase, such as the rājasūya and the aśvamedha was the transfer of material resources to and from the rājā. This has occasionally been viewed as a process of circulating wealth (Heesterman 1959:257) involving the reintegration of resources in the rājā and their subsequent dispersal. While the notion of circulation may have justified ritual exchanges, the impact of such transactions was not evenly felt--as we shall see, some social categories benefited at the expense of others, and the process did not result in the even temporary impoverishment of the rājā.

That receiving or obtaining wealth was an integral part of these rituals is evident from both prescriptive and descriptive literature. For instance, verses were used in the rājasūya to

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[54] Details of this appropriative relationship are discussed in Chapter VI.

ensure that the kṣatriya sacrificer received gifts (AB 7.34.3). In more tangible terms, the ratnins were expected to provide the materials required for the iṣṭis or sacrifices which were performed in their houses during the sacrifice (Heesterman 1957:49). That gifts were actually received by the rājā is also suggested by the description of Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya yajña in the Mahābhārata. Given the fact that the sacrifice and its outcome are in a sense intrinsic to the development of the narrative of the epic, it is likely that, despite elements of exaggeration, the account of Yudhiṣṭhira's gains would have corresponded with popular perceptions of what was expected to accrue to the successful yajamāna in the course of the ritual. The account which Duryodhana, who was in charge of receiving the gifts, gives (MBH 2.47) includes animal skins decorated with gold, horses, camels, cattle, clarified butter in gold pots, dāsīs or slave women, jewels, sheep, goats, gold, asses, fruits, honey, blankets, swords with ivory handles, seats, vehicles, beds, chariots, and elephants. While all of these objects were supposed to be brought by those who came to the sacrifice, wealth was also evidently collected by Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers who embarked on special expeditions for the purpose.[55]

Receiving or obtaining wealth was also a characteristic of the aśvamedha. Such wealth could be appropriated from brāhmaṇas who were ignorant of the significance of the ritual (SB 13.4.2.17, ApSS 20.5.15,16)[56] or from kinsfolk (LSS 9.1.14). The need to

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[55] Arjuna, for instance, is depicted as collecting kara from the defeated rājās (MBH 2.23.24). This included ratnas or jewels (ibid.:2.24.3), horses (ibid.:2.25.6), and cloth (ibid.:2.25.16).

[56] According to the Vādhula Sūtra (cited in Heesterman 1959: 258) ignorant vaiśyas could also be similarly robbed.

appropriate wealth for the ritual is also reflected in Yudhiṣṭhira's preparations for the aśvamedha where a major problem is posed by the fact that he has qualms about extracting kara or tribute from the other rulers who were already grief-stricken (and presumably impoverished) on account of their participation in the fratricidal war (MBH 14.3.14).[57] It is likely that the vājapeya was also associated with acquiring wealth, as is suggested by the notion that the chariot used in the ritual was a means of obtaining wealth (SB 5.1.4.3).

The wealth thus acquired was put to a variety of uses in the ritual context. Part of this was used to create the opulent setting for the ritual. While this aspect is not dealt with in the prescriptive ritual literature, it constitutes an integral part of the stereotyped descriptions of such occasions in the epics, with references to sacrificial posts being covered with gold (RAM 1.13.19, MBH 14.87.5) and to the entire sacrificial area being lavishly decorated.[58] Besides, sacrifices such as the aśvamedha involved the slaughter of hundreds of animals.

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[57] Ultimately, Yudhiṣṭhira does manage to appropriate the wealth deposited to the north of the Himalayas, from the mythical no-man's land of the Uttara Kurus. This was transported by sixty thousand camels, twice the number of horses, a hundred thousand elephants, numerous carts, chariots, mules, and men (MBH 14.64.15,16). Besides, rājās brought jewels, women, horses, and weapons for him (ibid.:14.86.13) The two aśvamedhas described in the Rāmāyaṇa are also characterised by the rāja receiving wealth (RAM 1.12.29,7.91,92). While such descriptions contain obvious elements of exaggeration, typical of epic literature, it is likely that these elaborations overlay a substratum which reflected popular perceptions of such rituals, or, alternatively, ideal displays of wealth envisaged by rulers.

[58] The Sabhā Parvan of the Mahābhārata provides the most outstanding of such descriptions.

Such displays of wealth had certain important consequences--on the one hand, they demonstrated the prosperity of the rājā to all those who witnessed the ritual.[59] The use of resources for this purpose also meant that some of the wealth received as gifts or tribute was removed from circulation instead of being recycled in the same form. In this sense, such displays, like potlatches, would have limited the potential for creating gift-credit (Gregory 1982:61). In other words, the wealth which the rājā received was diverted from the network of gift-exchanges and converted into a form of socio-political prestige. The removal of wealth from circulation in this fashion also implied that potential rivals were denied access to these resources and were consequently impoverished (ibid.).[60]

Part of the resources obtained were also used for a more generalised redistribution. This included supplying food to all those who attended the sacrifice (R.S.Sharma 1983a:77), evident from the description of the rājasūya and the aśvamedha in the epics. Yudhiṣṭhira's, rājasūya, for instance, was thought to be characterised by constant cries of "Let it be given! Let it be enjoyed" (dīyatām, bhujyatām, MBH 2.30.50), while mountains of food were regarded as typical of both Daśaratha's aśvamedha (RAM 1.13.11) and Yudhiṣṭhira's (MBH 14.87.12).[61] Similarly, everyone was satisfied with food, drink and clothes at Rāma's aśvamedha (RAM 7.92).

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[59]The success of the prccedure is exemplified in the Mahābhārata where Yudhiṣṭhira's sacrifice arouses Duryodhana's jealousy and hostility.

[60]This problem is evident in Duryodhana's refusal to perform an alternative sacrifice, as suggested by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and his recourse to the game of dice as a means of appropriating Yudhiṣṭhira's wealth instead.

[61]The latter was also depicted as having ponds of curds and butter.

While food was offered to all participants, it is likely that the more prestigious visitors (who may have contributed or collected substantial gifts or tribute) were given valuable presents as well. At Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya, for instance, guests were thought to be provided with cattle, beds, jewellery, and women (MBH 2.30.51),[62] while gold, silver, jewels, and cloth were bestowed by Rāma during his aśvamedha (RAM 7.92). Such exchanges enabled the rājā to acquire a reputation for generosity.

The rājā's generosity was not, however, uniform. As we have seen, not all participants in the ritual were treated to an identical form of hospitality. More important, only some participants, viz., the officiating priests, were eligible to receive the dakṣiṇā which accompanied these rituals, and which was often substantial. For instance, the rājasūya is explicitly described as a śatasahasra dakṣiṇā sacrifice (with a dakṣiṇā of a hundred thousand, possibly cattle, SSS 15.16.19, ApSS 18.8.2), and although this figure may have been exaggerated, and the actual transaction probably involved five thousand to ten thousand cattle (Heesterman 1957:162), the number of animals was significantly higher than that prescribed for the soma sacrifice and its variants.[63]

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[62] Hariścandra's rājasūya, which provided the model for Yudhiṣṭhira, was characterised by both the giving and receiving of wealth by the ruler (MBH 2.11.56,57). The symbolic and controversial offering of the arghya to Kṛṣṇa was also probably part of such exchanges.

[63] As with other rituals, some of the dakṣiṇā prescribed for specific parts of the rājasūya was clearly symbolic. For example, for the ratnīnāmhaviṁśi, the animals prescribed as dakṣiṇā varied in accordance with the deity to whom the offering was made (e.g., BSS 12.5) including a white-backed animal for the offering to Bṛhaspati, a bull for Indra, a milch cow for Aditi, a pregnant cow for Bhagā, a black cloth for Nirṛti, gold for Agni, a gelded bull for Varuṇa, a speckled animal for the Maruts, a pale animal for Savitṛ, a cow and calf for the Aśvins, a black animal for Pūṣan, and a spotted animal for Rudra.

The dakṣiṇā prescribed for the vājapeya, was, as noted earlier, characterised by the reiteration of the number seventeen, symbolic of Prajāpati, with prescriptions for giving a minimum of seventeen of each kind of object.[64] What is noteworthy is the range of objects prescribed as dakṣiṇā in this context--these included cattle, horse-drawn chariots, horses, oxen, slave women (dāsīs) adorned with gold ornaments (niṣkas), and elephants with gold seats (ASS 9.9.14).[65]

The dakṣiṇā associated with the aśvamedha was even more comprehensive and included the giving away of the four directions of the realm to the four principal sacrificial priests, with the hotṛ receiving the east, the brāhmaṇa the south, the adhvaryu the west, and the udgātṛ the north (SSS 16.9.18-21, ApSS 20.10.1, LSS 9.11.1-2). The giving away of the land by the rājā was regarded as controversial, as we have noted earlier. Its attempted ritualisation in the aśvamedha may not have involved the actual transfer of land (which is systematically repudiated in the epics as mentioned above), but was probably a means of asserting and sanctifying the rājā's claims to ownership. While this may not have been entirely successful, it permitted the discussion of a possibility which was evidently acquiring greater significance.

The giving away of the wives of the rājā, suggested in the ApSS (20.10.2)[66] probably had somewhat similar implications. While it may

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[64]The number could optionally be raised to a hundred of each type (ASS 9.9.14).

[65]The lists in the other Śrauta Sūtras show slight variations. The SSS (15.3.12-15) refers to the giving of cloth and drums, the BSS (11.6) includes serving men, while the ApSS (18.3.4,5) includes sheep and goats. It is likely that these variations were based on the exigencies of specific situations.

[66]In this context, the mahiṣī was to be given to the brāhmaṇa, the vāvātā to the hotṛ, the parivṛktī to the udgātṛ and the pālagalī to the adhvaryu.

have underlined "the marital character of the bond between the sacrificial patron and the brahman" (Heesterman 1959:245), it was also an assertion of the control of the rājā over his wives, who could be treated as objects to be granted to the priests.

Other objects prescribed as dakṣiṇā for the aśvamedha included ritual objects of gold and silver (BSS 15.3), and four thousand niṣkas (ibid.:15.4). The quantities of wealth to be transferred were often deliberately left undefined--in one instance (LSS 9.11.1-2), the yajamāna was expected to give till such time as the priests refused to accept any more.[67]

The ideal of transferring enormous quantities of wealth to brāhmaṇas in the context of the aśvamedha was reiterated in legends and epics. Rājās like Udamaya Ātreya and Bharata Dauḥṣanti, for instance, were reputed to have given ten thousand elephants and an equal number of slave women (AB 8.39.8), while Daśaratha was supposed to have given brāhmaṇas ten thousand cattle, ten crores of gold, and four times as much silver (RAM 1.13.41), and Yudhiṣṭhira was reputed to have given the enormous sum of a thousand crores of niṣkas as dakṣiṇā for his aśvamedha (MBH 14.91.7).[68]

Even apart from such large-scale sacrifices, the emphasis on the generosity of the rājā to priests persists almost throughout the brahmanical tradition in both sacrificial and non-sacrificial contexts.

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[67] The aindramahābhiṣeka, another composite ritual which legitimised rājya, was characterised by a dakṣiṇā of cattle, four-footed animals, and hiraṇya or gold (AB 8.39.6).

[68] The giving of broadly similar categories of wealth by rājās is also referred to in the Buddhist tradition. For instance, King Okkaka was supposed to have performed the assamedha, purisamedha, and vāchapeya and gave brāhmaṇas cows, beds, garments, adorned women, and well-made chariots drawn by well-bred horses (Chakravarti 1987:43).

This is evident from the dānastutis (literally the praise of gifts) in the Rg Veda, which extol the generosity of donors of niṣkas, horses, cattle, chariots, and women (vadhus) (e.g., RV 1.126).[69] It is likely that such dānastutis provided the model for the compositions of the brāhmaṇa lute-player in the aśvamedha who was expected to sing about the generosity and the sacrifices performed by the rājā (SB 13.1.5.6, BSS 15.8, ApSS 20.6.5).

What is also significant is that although the rājā was expected to be generally benevolent, reflected in the notion of the rājā as payasvin or full of milk and hence a potential nourisher (PVB 18.9.21), and in the characterisation of specific rājās such as Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa (CU 4.1.1) as a pious giver, a bestower of much wealth, and the keeper of an open house (Max Muller 1965:56), it was the generosity of rājās to brāhmaṇas which was categorically recorded within the brahmanical tradition. These included references to the gifts of daughters by Śaryāta to placate the sage Cyavana (SB 4.1.5.7) and by Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa who was thought to have won over the brāhmaṇa Raikva by a similar gift (CU 4.2.4). Other generous rājās included Janaka (SB 11.3.1.4), who gave a thousand cows to Yājñavalkya for the knowledge of the agnihotra.

The recognition accorded to such gifts is not surprising, as these evidently provided precedents for brāhmaṇas who sought to claim some of the resources of the rājā. However, the constant need to bolster such claims, reflected in their incorporation within the tradition, points to a certain degree of tension vis-a-vis the actual

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[69] According to Gonda (1965:217): "In these dānastutis the generosity of the donors is emphasised to such a degree that they obviously were regarded as typical representatives of liberality, i.e. to say, the donors were evidently represented as conforming to a definite standard;they ought to be liberal."

division of resources. This is also suggested by the non-ritualistic prescriptions of the Dharma Sūtras, where the rājā was specifically instructed to support śrotriyas (literally brāhmaṇas who were versed in the Śrutis or what was regarded as the revealed tradition, ADS 2.10.25.9, GDS 18.35), brāhmaṇas (ADS 2.10.26.1) and snātakas (i.e., those who had completed the period of Vedic education, VDS 12.2). What is likely is that while the rājā probably did share some resources with brāhmaṇas, this was not as substantial as could be wished for by the latter. Hence, the rājā was constantly prodded on to be more and more bountiful, even if selectively so.

The transfer of resources to brāhmaṇas, whether it measured up to their expectations or not, had other implications as well. These goods, whether animals, women, gold, or vehicles, like those used for ritual displays and the actual sacrifice, were removed from the network of generalised gift-exchange. As a result, some productive resources could be selectively accumulate, as noted earlier, and this would have sharpened the process of socio-economic differentiation.[70]

The exchange of resources which the rājā attempted to regulate was thus assymetrical. This assymetry rested on the division and appropriation of labour in the form of resources and skills which were accumulated and employed differentially in the ritual context. The appropriation of labour was possible through what Gosden (1989: 369) describes as the "trick of false generosity" which:

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[70] As Gosden (1989:373) observes: "Consumption of benefits deriving from controlling gift production on the one hand, and reinvestment, on the other, are quite different strategies with contrary consequences. The former leads to the dissipation of resources, while reinvestment can provide an increased power base." The creation of such a power base is reflected, to some extent, in the fact that most of the brahmadeya (land given to brāhmaṇas) lands referred to in Buddhist literature were supposed to be given by the rājās Bimbisāra and Pasenadi (Chakravarti 1987:24).

> can be achieved precisely because there is no overall measure of labour. Instead the ranking of gifts operates to camouflage the flow of labour within the group, disguising the benefits the chief derives from controlling production, exchange and debt (ibid.).

In the context under discussion, the performance of sacrifices involved the appropriation of the labour of primary producers in the form of produce including grain and animal produce. It also included access to the labour of craftpersons such as smiths, carpenters, weavers, and potters, and to the labour involved in acquiring rare prestige goods such as gold, jewels, elephants, etc. Besides, the labour of ritual specialists was also harnessed. Given the fact that there was no general standard of labour but rather a ranking of produce or skills, characteristic of a gift economy (Gregory 1982:49), those who contributed relatively less prestigious goods or skills were rewarded with little more than food.

Thus, while all those who were present at and participated in the sacrifice benefited from the bounty of the rājā, the advantages were not identical. We have noted the possible effects of such differential generosity in the context of the soma sacrifice. Given the fact that the rājasūya or the aśvamedha were larger in both scale and scope, the impact of assymetrical distribution in the context of such sacrifices was far-reaching.

These sacrifices were also characterised by the widening of the range of exchange networks, both in terms of the number and categories of participants, and in terms of the objects brought within the scope of such exchanges. Hence, control of these transactions ensured a commanding position for the rājā. It has been observed that those in a position to give what are regarded as prestigious gifts acquire control over their gift-debtors in societies where gift-exchanges are important (Gregory 1982:51). Such a position of control was

clearly open to the rājā who could receive a variety of prestigious goods from different sources, but who alone, by virtue of his control over all the channels of exchange, could grant all of these.[71]

At the same time, many earlier forms of exchange were transformed in the ritual context. An example if this is provided by the mock cattle-raid of the rājasūya (SB 5.4.3.1). While this has been viewed as the survival of a popular contest to determine the prowess or skill of the rājā (R.S.Sharma 1980:57), the form in which this was manipulated in the ritual context is significant. In the ritual, the victims of the raid were the svā or kinsfolk of the rājā, and the cow which was ritually appropriated by the sacrificer was transferred to the brāhmaṇa. It is likely that originally cattle-raids were inter-community rather than intra-community affairs.[72] In such a situation, the rājā who led the raid was probably expected to share some of his booty with his kinsfolk. However, in the ritual, the rājā's customary role was virtually reversed--instead of providing a share to his svā, he was depicted as seizing their cattle, and the tension or conflict was now envisaged as existing within the community. The resolution which was postulated, viz., the expropriation of the wealth of the kinsfolk, legitimised through the ritual support provided by brāhmaṇas, tended to weaken the ties between the rājā

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[71] This is typified in the description of Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata. He receives specific (and distinct) items of wealth from different people--both commoners and fellow-chiefs--and he alone is in a position to distribute all of these. However, as we have noted above, the ability to grant such objects did not actually mean that all the resources acquired as gifts or tribute were recirculated in similar exchanges.

[72] Duryodhana's attempt to seize Virāṭa rājā's cattle, described in the Mahābhārata, probably provides an example of this.

and the kin-based community on the one hand, while strengthening those between the rājā and the brāhmana on the other.[73]

Another distributive process, that associated with dicing, was similarly modified. It has been suggested that dicing was a means of allocating rights of usage over land (Thapar 1984:31) or wealth (Bhattacharya 1975:42). Such a process would have ensured a more or less equitable situation.[74] However, in the rājasūya (SB 5.4.4.6-25), this mechanism was modified to ensure the victory of the rājā on the one hand and to establish a hierarchy amongst those associated with the passing of the sacrificial sword, the sphya,[75] used for preparing the gaming ground, with the sajāta or kinsman (literally those sharing a common birth with the rājā) being placed last (ibid.:5.4.4.19). The order in which the sword was passed was viewed as a means of weakening each subsequent recipient in comparisor

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[73]For an alternative, asocial interpretation of the rite, see Heesterman (1957:137), who suggests that the giving of the cow won by the rājā was a means of removing the symbolic embryonic membranes which could have been harmful to the sacrificer after his ritual rebirth.

[74]Woodburn's (1982:443 ff) description of the institution of gambling amongst the Hadza is illuminating in this context: "It (i.e., gambling) is one of the major means by which scarce and local objects are circulated throughout the country...The circulation is accomplishe not through some form of exchange which would bind participants to one another in potentially unequal relationships of kinship or contract. The transactions are neutralised and depersonalised by being passed through the game... Individual effort, craft, skill, and particularly, the skill of trading with outsiders are quite variable. The attraction of gambling mobilises effort and skill but discounts its proceeds at random in a way which subverts the accumulation of individual wealth... It is paradoxical that a game based on the desire to win and, in a sense, to accumulate, should operate so directly against the possibility of systematic accumulation. Its levelling effect is very powerful.

[75]It is likely that the sphya represented the wooden plough-share commonly used for agriculture (Patil 1982:96).

to his predecessors.[76] Thus, exchanges which were initially not directional were transformed beyond recognition.

It is evident then that the emergence and consolidation of the institution of rājya was interwoven with a range of developments. These resulted in the virtual transformation of earlier notions of rājya, as exemplified by Varuṇa and Soma. As we have seen, the attributes with which they were associated were gradually marginalised. This is evident in the discussion on the creation of the conditions of material well-being, in the contrast between access to productive resources envisaged for the deities and their human counterparts, and in the possible uses envisaged for such resources.

At another level, the position of the human rājā was envisaged as somewhat similar, but by no means identical with that of the śreṣṭha and the adhipati. While the definition of rājya was fairly distinctive, the rājā, like the śreṣṭha, was linked to cosmogonic speculation through the sacrifice. However, although this was achieved through establishing an equation between the rājā/yajamāna and the divine śreṣṭha Prajāpati, this was not incorporated mechanically as a variation of the soma sacrifice but at a different level altogether--by associating Prajāpati with the specific, complex rituals which legitimated rājya and which required the participation of a wide range of people. Thus the rājā could be perceived as both

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[76] The order in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is as follows--the brāhmaṇa (adhvaryu) to the rājā, to the rājabhrātṛ (the brother of the rājā), to the sūta or the sthapati, to the grāmaṇī, to the sajāta. The Śrauta Sūtras tend to include some or all of the ratnins in the list (e.g., BSS 12.15, ApSS 18.18.14). The inclusion of all the ratnins, suggested in the relatively late ApSS, probably reflects the completion of the process of ritualisation, where the sajāta was totally excluded. Despite the explicit reference to weakening the hierarchically ordered participants, Heesterman (1957:151) considers the ritual to be an example of the "rotation of cosmic powers."

like and unlike the śreṣṭha. Such an ambiguous position was probably useful in extending the sphere of influence of the rājā to incorporate more, and possibly different categories of people within the realm.

A similar ambiguity was evident regarding the control of productive resources. While the human rājā, unlike his divine counterparts, and unlike the virāj, aspired to control a range of resources, like the śreṣṭha and the adhipati, this was conceptualised, not in terms of absolute control, but in terms of control in order to distribute. Although this had a similarity with the distributive network associated with the virāj, this was at best superficial, as both the range and the nature of the rājā's distributive activities were, as we have seen, vastly different.

What is apparent in all these spheres is a movement away from the attributes of leadership which were not hierarchically oriented to the leadership of a differentiated, wider, socio-political sphere. In the process, although the rājā continued to be associated with notions of general benevolence, this tended to be marginalised. The specific activities of the rājā, especially as these were related to distribution, ensured, not general well-being, but differential benefits, with the rājā himself emerging as one of the principal beneficiaries. Thus, the rāṣṭra did symbolise wealth, but this was not for everybody. As we hope to show, the social implications of the transformation of rājya were manifold.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE RĀJĀ (II): FROM ṚTASYA GOPA TO DHĀRMIKA RĀJĀ

The rāṣṭra both unites and divides.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

I

In the previous chapter we had noted that the definition of rājya was gradually enlarged to encompass more and more people and social categories within the sphere of influence of the rājā. We had also examined some of the processes whereby the rājā was both extending and intensifying his influence or control over these categories--by claiming a cosmogonic role, by asserting control over produce and productive resources, and by attempting to divert and channelise exchange mechanisms as a result of which the distribution of resources became more and more inegalitarian. We had suggested that these processes were interwoven with societal changes, which they both influenced and by which they were in turn influenced. Here we will examine this dimension of rājya.

It is important to bear in mind that the interaction between the rājā and the social order of which he was a part was a dynamic one, in which not only was the rājā's role in society envisaged as changing, but the very definition and understanding of the social context was being transformed. While these developments were interrelated, we will distinguish between them for analytical

purposes, focusing primarily on the former development for the present.[1]

Certain crucial social issues had been identified earlier (Chapter I). These included inter-varṇa relationships, kinship ties amongst men, and gender stratification. We had seen that systematic attempts were made to associate those who aspired to positions of status with these issues. These attempts were, moreover, structured so as to confer a more or less identical role on such men--whether śreṣṭhas, adhipatis or svarājs. The position of the rājā vis-a-vis these social issues was slightly more complex. As we shall see, his role was somewhat similar but by no means identical with that of the śreṣṭha, who was construed as an ideal type for other categories of leaders or rulers, as mentioned earlier. For instance, while both the rājā and the śreṣṭha were envisaged as playing a role vis-a-vis the varṇa hierarchy, the rājā ultimately claimed an overarching authority which was far more comprehensive than what the śreṣṭha aspired to.

As in the instances referred to earlier, there are significant differences between the roles envisaged for the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, vis-a-vis these issues, and those expected of their human counterparts. In some cases, such as the varṇa order, the divine rājās were assigned roles in the later Vedic tradition, which, to some extent, ran counter to their conceptualisation during the early Vedic phase. However, this modification was evidently not enough to cope with the situation. Hence, the role envisaged for

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[1] The latter process will be examined in Chapters VII and VIII.

the human rājā, while incorporating some elements of the new characterisation of the gods, very often extended beyond this.

It will also be evident that the difference between the divine and the human plane was not uniform--it was sharpest in the context of the rājā-viś relationship and in the attempt to define a role for the rājā vis-a-vis the varṇa hierarchy as a whole, but was relatively less marked in the context of the relationship between the rājā and brāhmaṇas. While this may be partly due to the brahmanical bias of our sources, with the priestly authors attempting to portray their own relationship to the rājā as relatively stable and unchanging (and hence less open to challenge), it may also reflect a situation where the rājā's relationship with certain social categories was changing more dramatically than with others.

When we examine the tensions within the kinship structure, the contrast between the divine and human rājās is, if anything, even more striking. In the early Vedic tradition, Varuṇa was one of the gods most closely associated with asuratva (e.g., RV 1.24.14), while in the later Vedic tradition, Soma was identified with Vṛtra (e.g., SB 3.4.3.13). Given the kinship connotations of the deva-asura and the Indra-Vṛtra struggles as depicted in the later Vedic tradition, referred to earlier (Chapter II), this meant that the typical divine rājās were conceived of as belonging to the wrong camp. The human rājā, on the other hand, was accorded a different role in these conflicts and their ritual resolutions, being often explicitly conceived of as identical with Indra in such situations. We will examine the significance of what virtually amounted to a reversal of roles in the context of the ambiguity which characterised these conflicts. We will also focus on the links between the rājā and

the patrilineal kinship structure, which, we had argued, provided alternative support in a situation where more egalitarian kinship relations were breaking down.

Turning to gender stratification, we find a more or less similar development. While Varuṇa and Soma were conceived of as gendered, masculine gods, as noted earlier, their role vis-a-vis issues of gender were rather different from that of Indra and Prajāpati, the typical divine śreṣṭhas. The role of the human rājā was, as we shall see, conceived of as somewhere in between these possibilities.

We had suggested earlier (Chapter II) that intervention in such issues was a means whereby leaders attempted to generate social support and win acceptance. At the same time, these issues were becoming more complex. In this situation, an active role often meant supporting one social category against the other(s). As such, the human rājā, in the very process of acquiring social support and recognition, reinforced social differences.

Finally, it will be evident from an analysis of myths, rituals, legends, incidental references, and prescriptions that the changes in the social role of the rājā were substantial. This is reflected in the replacement of the ideal of ṛta, common in the early Vedic tradition, by that of dharma, which later acquired central importance within the brahmanical tradition. The declining importance attached to ṛta is evident from the fact that the word occurs only seven times in the principal Upaniṣads (Bhattacharya 1975:39). According to Bhattacharya (ibid.):

> This shows that Ṛta originally stood for a different set of principles which were consistent with the early Vedic way of life, but eventually those principles were undermined and annihilated...

Broadly, *ṛta* implied a universal, holistic order. While *dharma* was also envisaged as universal, the specific definition of *dharma* varie according to social categories, with what was prescribed for one category being prohibited for the other. The implications of upholding *ṛta* and *dharma* were, we will argue, fundamentally differen and the replacement of one role by the other meant, in effect, that the *rājā* was abandoning certain social functions and taking up other In other words, the nature of *rājya* was transformed. As will be evident, this implied changes in the mechanisms whereby the *rājā* fulfilled his roles, as well as the means whereby the *rājā*'s positio was legitimated. We will examine these developments in the next chapter.

II

It is well-known that upholding the varṇāśrama dharma was regarded as one of the basic functions of the rājā within the brahmanical tradition. However, this role of the rājā was not coeval with the existence of rājya. In other words, although the institution of rājya may be traced back to the early Vedic tradition, evident from references to both divine and human rājās, such rājās were not associated with establishing or maintaining the varṇa-based order.

If this was a role which the rājā gradually took on, it becomes necessary to analyse the process whereby this was achieved. Here we will examine the ascription of varṇa to divine and human rājās, which may be viewed as one aspect of the process, reflecting as it did, the integration of the rājā within the varṇa hierarchy.

In the early Vedic tradition, kṣatra was one of the characteristic epithets of the divine rājā Varuṇa, as is evident from the fact that four of the five occurrences of the word kṣatriya were associated with him (e.g., RV 5.68.3, Choudhuri 1981:38, Deshmukh 1933:214, Griswold 1971:135). This association continued in the later Vedic tradition as well (e.g., SB 9.4.2.16, BAU 1.4.11). The other divine rājā, Soma, was also conceived of as endowed with kṣatra (Kapadia 1959:217, BAU 1.4.11). Thus, kṣatra was clearly an attribute connected with rājās.

This connection was explicitly reiterated on the human plane thrcugh the rituals which legitimated rājya. For instance, the dīkṣā or the initiation of the sacrificer for the rājasūya (SB 5.3.5.20, BSS 12.9) was regarded as a means of acquiring kṣatra,

while the yajamāna was thought to be reborn from the womb of kṣatra, represented by his wife, in the vājapeya (BSS 11.11).[2]

While the emphasis on kṣatra suggests a certain continuity between the early and the later Vedic tradition, there are indications that the definition and scope of kṣatra were changing. In the early Vedic tradition kṣatra had universalistic connotations of "dominion, supremacy, power, might" (SED:s.v.), but in the later Vedic tradition, the power associated with kṣatra was defined in more specific ways. This is evident from the equation between the rāṣtra and kṣatra (AB 7.34.4). The rāṣtra, apart from indicating the sphere of influence of the rājā, was tending to be identified with specific economic and social configurations.[3] Hence, the equation of kṣatra with rāṣtra meant that the former was now viewed as power which was exercised within a particular context. As much is evident from the association of the ability to eat with kṣatra (SB 8.7.1.2). Some of the implications of the ability to eat have been referred to earlier, where we had argued that this signified an ability to intervene in and control existing or emerging exchange mechanisms. At another level, as we shall see (Section III), the ability to eat symbolised an increasingly oppressive relationship between social categories regarded as eaters and others regarded as food. In this context, the equation of kṣatra with the ability to eat

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[2] The notion of the rājā being reborn endowed with kṣatra was reinforced by the equation of the throne on which he sat during the rājasūya with the womb of kṣatra (SB 5.4.4.3) while the clothes used on the occasion were compared to the womb of kṣatra (BSS 12.9) or Indra (ApSS 18.16.9). The reiteration of the connection through a variety of ritual means points to its importance for the rājā.

[3] The economic attributes of the rāṣtra have been discussed in the previous chapter while the social dimension of rāṣtra will be explored in the course of the present chapter.

meant that a relatively oppressive definition of power was gaining acceptance. It is likely that the human rājā attempted to appropriate the entire range of connotations associated with kṣatra. This probably enabled him to conceal the real, oppressive nature of his power within a broader definition.

At the same time, both the divine (e.g., BAU 1.4.11) and the human rājā (e.g., SB 1.3.2.19) were explicitly or implicitly being defined as kṣatriyas or rājaṅyas. This was also equated with what was later standardised as the second category of the four-fold varṇa order.[4] The emphasis on identifying the rājā as a kṣatriya was a means of incorporating him within the varṇa framework. While this was useful in connecting the rājā with others who were also identified in terms of varṇa, it also implied a certain curtailment of the authority of the rājā, which was now envisaged as valid within this particular framework. Thus, there were two contradictory tendencies at work--one favouring the assimilation of the rājā to the varṇa order, and the other favouring a distinctive identity. As will be evident, the rājā's role vis-a-vis specific varṇas and the order as a whole, was characterised by a certain amount of tension.

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[4] Very often, as in the Dharma Sūtras, the duties prescribed for the rājā coincide with those prescribed for the kṣatriya. The process whereby the four-fold order was standardised will be examined in Chapter VII.

III

We had seen (Chapter IV) how the social category of the viś was thought to be of basic importance for the rājā in both the early and the later Vedic tradition. Many divine rājās were identified as rājās of the viś (e.g., Agni, RV 2.2.8).[5] The human rājā was, likewise, proclaimed in terms of the viś in rituals such as the aśvamedha (ApSS 20.4.3) and the rājasūya (SB 5.3.3.12) which legitimated his change of status.

The fact that the existence of the viś was intrinsic to that of the rājā was also recognised in analogies. In one instance (BSS 3.17), the rāṣṭra and the viś were equated with the sāman and the ṛc, i.e., the vedic hymn and its component verses respectively. Given the fact that the hymn was comprised of such verses, this would indicate that the viś, including one or more communities, formed the basis out of which the rāṣṭra was constituted. This analogy, at the same time, contained indications of a shift in the rājā-viś/rāṣṭra-viś relationship by suggesting that the rāṣṭra or the sphere of influence of the rājā was no longer confined to a single viś but extended to include a number of distinctly identified but more or less structurally similar social categories.

This process of incorporation, of which other examples will be noted, would have involved a number of developments. On the one hand, the rājā who attempted to extend his sphere of influence had to contend with the leaders of other viś. On the other hand, he had to establish a relationship of control and support with those who

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[5] For a detailed list of rājās and their connection with the viś, see below.

were brought within the rāṣṭra. Of these two activities, the first necessitated either the absorption or the elimination of alternative leaders or patterns of leadership.[6] The second, on which we will focus for the present, was associated with attempts to define and regulate the relationship between the rājā and the viś. Such attempts were fairly varied--stressing the common bonds between the rājā and the viś, differentiating between the rājā/kṣatra and the viś, and, related to this, asserting the supremacy of the former vis-a-vis the latter. Occasionally, efforts were made to achieve these ends more or less simultaneously, as for instance, in rituals such as the aśvamedha and the rājasūya. Elsewhere, one aspect of the relationship was emphasised at the expense of others. The exploration of a range of possibilities, as noted earlier, points to a relatively fluid situation of socio-political transition, where the attempt to establish stratified political relations was constantly challenged. At the same time, as noted earlier, the rājā acquired a role of central importance as a mediator between different peoples, who were related to one another through him.

The novelty of the rājā-viś relationship as it developed during the later Vedic phase is, to an extent, reflected in the paucity of myths connecting the typical divine rājās to this theme. Thus, while both Varuṇa and Soma were conceived of as endowed with kṣatra, they were rarely identified as representatives of this category vis-a-vis the deities who were regarded as representatives of the viś, i.e.,

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[6] While examples of this have been noted earlier (Chapters II-IV), the details of the prccess will be discussed in the next chapter.

the Maruts and the Viśvedevas.[7] In this respect, as in many others, their position presents a contrast with that of the divine śreṣṭha Indra. We would suggest that this contrast reflects the difficulties inherent in associating the more universalistic deities with roles which varied according to particular social circumstances. It is also likely that the specific role envisaged for the rājā vis-a-vis the viś, that of an oppressor, did not "fit" very well with the established characterisation of Varuṇa and Soma. Hence, attempts were made to resolve the rājā-viś relationship through rituals and prescriptions rather than through myths involving the divine rājās.

One of the most outstanding examples of such resolutions was the use of the pāriplava cycle in the aśvamedha (SB 13.4.3.3-15, ASS 10.7, SSS 16.2.1-30 etc.). This cycle consisted of units of ten days which were repeated throughout the period when the sacrificial horse was let loose to wander. Each day of the cycle was associated with a distinctive deity, a special category of traditional lore, and a viś, split into two levels, one consisting of those who were present at the sacrifice, and a second of those whom they were supposed to represent. Thus, each viś was conceived of as endowed with a deity, a body of sacred lore, and was, moreover, equated with a distinct natural or supernatural category (See Table I for details). In a sense then, the stereotyped lists associated with the pāriplava cycle provide us with a map of sccial relations, codifying a wealth of information.

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[7] One of the rare occasions when Varuṇa was associated with the Maruts was in the varuṇapraghāsa (SB 2.5.2.6), where the altar for Varuṇa, symbolic of the kṣatra, was made higher than that for the Maruts, symbolic of the viś, to ensure that prajā served the kṣatriya.

The divine rājās, for instance, can be split into two distinct categories--one including early Vedic deities or personages such as Manu, Yama, Varuṇa, Soma, and Indra, and a second, possibly non-Vedic, including Arbuda Kādraveya, Kuvera Vaiśravaṇa, Asita Dhānvan, Matsya Sāmmada, and Tārkṣya Vaipśyata. What seems likely is that in an attempt to widen the definition of rājya and incorporate more and more people within the viś, deities specific to certain regions or social groups were accorded recognition within the sacrificial cult. It is also significant that initially these deities were considered equal to their Vedic counterparts, each being associated with a single day's worship. Nevertheless, the very process of assimilation probably reduced them to a secondary status, as is evident from the fact that they are rarely referred to subsequently. This process is also evident in the order in which the deities were arranged--the Vedic gods by and large ranked higher than their non-Vedic counterparts, who were, at the same time, enclosed within the framework of the Vedic cult by the position accorded to Indra, who was placed last.

The difference evident between the two categories of deities becomes sharper when one turns to the viś associated with them. Here we find that the Vedic gods were associated with human and superhuman categories--including manuṣyas, pitṛs, gandharvas, apsaras, and devas (human beings, patrilineal ancestors, masculine and feminine celestial beings, and deities respectively), while the non-Vedic gods were associated with categories which can at best be described as sub-human and at worst as anti-human--including serpents, rakṣas, asuras, water creatures (probably fish), and birds.

What is significant is that each of these ten categories was supposed tc be represented by people who were present at the ritual. If one extends the two-fold division observed earlier tc these people, the Vedic gods were associated with householders (grhamedhins), elders (sthaviras), handsome young men, beautiful women, and learned brāhmaṇas, who, like the deities ascribed to them, encompassed the other people within their fold.

If one explores the differences between the two groups further, it is evident that those who were associated with the Vedic deities were also conceived of as endowed with what were viewed as positive social attributes. For instance, the grhamedhins as their very name suggests, were associated with a distinct social, economic, and ritual order, centring around a particular form of household organisation. Briefly, this was a patrilineal household, associated with the production of anna and paśu, and forming the locus of what were recognised as legitimate exchanges and ritual activities.[8] The sthaviras were probably elders who were respected on account of their wisdom, while the handsome young men and women were probably valued on account of what were regarded as positive sexual attributes. The last social category, the brāhmaṇas, owed their status to their access tc and virtual monopcly over prestigious ritual activities.

As opposed tc this, the representatives of the second group were by and large defined in terms of activities which did not conform tc the norm. Those versed in serpent lore, or those with

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[8] The features associated with the grha will be explored in greater detail in Chapter VIII.

knowledge about fish (probably fisherfolk) or birds, were obviously differentiated from agricultural or pastoral groups. Similarly, those defined as robbers (selagas), or as living on usury (kusīdins) operated within systems of exchange which were different from those which were considered acceptable (discussed in Chapters II-IV). While the inclusion of the brahmacārin (as an alternative or in addition to bird-catchers) within this group may at first sight seem surprising, it is probable that this was an attempt to incorporate a category following ascetic practices within the brahmanical framework by identifying them with brahmacārins.[9]

The assimilation of these groups within the ritual was, moreover, accompanied by the appropriation of their traditional lore, which was to be recited or performed on the day ascribed to them. What is particularly noteworthy is that in this context, brāhmaṇas alone were accorded the role of disseminating the lore. In the process, it is likely that these traditions would have been modified to bring them into consonance with the central concerns of the brahmanical authorities. Hence, although these groups were recognised as important, the context within which this occurred suggested their subordinate status as well. In other words, the common designation of each group or community as a viś concealed important differences amongst them, which could crystallise into sharper social classifications. This was almost inevitable when such groups were brought into contact with one another in a context which was controlled or manipulated by a few categories to the exclusion of others.

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[9] This is also suggested by the fact that the other attributes associated with this category--viz., birds, the obscure deity Tārkṣya Vaipaśyata, and the Purāṇas, are clearly non-Vedic.

The incorporation of diverse categories within the definition of the viś had other implications as well. While the rājā was clearly connected with his own viś, his links with others who were brought within the same classification was obviously less close. This meant that links with such categories had to be forged, and it is likely that rituals such as the aśvamedha provided an important occasion for establishing such ties.

At another level, it probably made the establishment of a different, more exploitative relationship vis-a-vis these categories more acceptable. While establishing such a relationship with the rājā's own viś may have met with a certain amount of resistance, this was probably considered more appropriate towards those who were regarded as an integral but subordinate part of the wider definition of the viś which was emerging. Ultimately, what was viewed as the justified subordination of some social categories provided a precedent for extending a similar relationship towards others as well.[10]

That a change was taking place in the rājā-viś relationship in general is amply documented from rituals and incidental references in the later Vedic tradition. The metaphor used to express this change is itself a telling one--that of eating, distinguishing explicitly between the kṣatra or the rājā who was regarded as the

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[10] In this context, the references to ten types of produce or productive resources appropriated by the yajamāna who performed the aśvamedha, referred to earlier (Chapter IV), acquires significance. While these were not explicitly linked to the ten social categories who were connected through the pāriplava cycle, the reiteration of the number ten in both situations suggests that each type of produce was appropriated from a particular social category.

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eater, and the viś, who, more often than not, was viewed as his food. This was a relationship legitimised through rituals such as the aindramahābhiṣeka (AB 8.39.3) in the course of which the rājā was thought to be reborn as the eater of the viś (viśāmattā). The existence of such exploitation is also reflected in similes (e.g, SB 13.2.9.8) comparing the viś to anna or yava (food or barley), while the rājā was compared to the deer who ate such grain.[11] The reiteration of the notion of eating, implying as it did the destruction and/or absorption of what was eaten, probably refers not to the actual destruction of people, but to the destruction of a less inegalitarian relationship between the rājā and the viś in favour of a more exploitative one.

Conceiving of the viś as food also implied the dependence of the rājā on the former. After all, the eater could not survive without food. It is this which probably accounts for the recognition of the importance of the viś in rituals which legitimated rājya. This recognition took a variety of forms.

One means adopted was to acquire or "win" the viś through rituals. Thus, the vājapeya was regarded as a means of winning the divine and human viś (SB 5.1.3.5),[12] probably implying an assertion of control over all categories of people. Elsewhere (PVB 18.10.9), stomas symbolic of the viś were placed on either side of that

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[11] A similar relationship is suggested in the incidental reference to a rājā being able to win many people (aparān viśam), and take what he desires (SB 1.3.2.14).

[12] Tena daivīm viśam ujjayati...tena mānusīm viśam ujjayati. The former probably referred to what was conceptualised as the community of the gods, typified by the Maruts, and the Viśvedevas, as noted earlier.

representing the kṣatra to ensure that the latter was surrounded by the former and that the viś did not abandon the kṣatra. A similar attempt to ensure that the viś was stable and did not desert the rājā was included as a part of the rājasūya (SB 5.3.4.14)[13] In a sense, the concern here was broadly similar to that envisaged in the context of the soma sacrifice.

The importance of the viś was also ritually recognised in the notion that it constituted the womb from which the kṣatra or rājā emerged. For instance, in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.4.11, 5.5.2.9), the kṣatra was conceived of as the embryo of the viś. Elsewhere, (e.g., ApSS 16.32.4), the analogy was extended to equate the viś with the cow, the rājaṅya with the embryo, cattle with the embryonic membrane, the rājā with the calf, and bali with the milk produced by the cow during the first seven days after giving birth (the pīyūsa).

The close ties of near equality which bound the viś to the rājā are also suggested by the access which the former had to the rituals which legitimated rājya. For instance, the vājapeya could be performed by members of the first three varṇas (SSS 16.17.1-3).[14] While the viś could not perform the rājasūya independently, a representative of this category participated in the abhiṣeka which was central to the change of status of the rājā (SB 5.3.5.14, BSS 12.9,

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[13] Viśam eva asmai tat sthāvarām anapakraminīm karoti.

[14] The brāhmaṇa was assured of reaching the heaven of Bṛhaspati, the kṣatriya that of Indra, and the vaiśya that of the Maruts in this context. The associations established in the agnicayana were more or less similar (ApSS 17.19.8). Here the brāhmaṇa's abhiṣeka was thought to enable him to attain the sāmrājya of Agni, that of the rājaṅya to that of Indra, and the vaiśya's that of Bṛhaspati.

(ApSS 18.16.4). This was, moreover, viewed as a means of ensuring that the viś, amongst other varṇa categories, protected the rājā (SB 5.4.1.5). However, the situation vis-a-vis the aśvamedha was different, the vaiśyīputra (literally the son of a vaiśya woman) being explicitly denied the right to perform the ritual (SB 13.2.9.8).[15] Thus, while the viś had more or less equal access (at least theoretically) to some rituals which legitimated rājya, and played a central role in conferring legitimate status in others, this possibility was not universally recognised.

As important as these variations is the fact that none of these rituals was conceived of as incorporating alternative goals. In this sense, they presented a contrast to the soma sacrifice, which, as we had seen (Chapter II) could theoretically be used by the viś to destroy the kṣatra just as the latter could use it to assert the ritual subordination of the former. We had argued that this ability to define alternative and contradictory goals for the soma sacrifice was an indication of the strength of the viś. In the context of rājya, however, while the viś could perform the vājapeya, this did not involve challenging the existing or emerging social order--in other rituals such as the rājasūya and the aśvamedha, the role of the viś was envisaged as supportive but subordinate. It is likely that the very scale of these sacrifices made it difficult for commoners to even attempt to perform them, unlike the soma sacrifice. Hence, each occasion on which they were actually performed reiterated the difference between the viś and the rājā, apart from providing an occasion for the transfer of resources from the former to the latter as noted earlier.

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[15] As an extension of this, the yajamāna who failed to perform the aśvamedha was regarded as equal to the rājanya or the viś (SB 13.4.2.17).

While the viś was thus denied the option, both theoretically and practically, of contending for equal status with the kṣatra or even limiting its power through the ritual, these rituals were used to reinforce socio-political differences between the two. This was achieved through denying the importance of the rājā-viś connection. One instance of this is provided by alternative definitions of the rājā's ritual birth. While the possibility of the rājā being born from the viś was recognised, as noted above, alternatives were also suggested. As we have seen (Section II), the rājā was occasionally conceived of as being born from the womb of kṣatra. In other instances, he was thought to be born from the womb of brahma.[16] In other words, efforts were made to substitute the rājā-viś relationship by other ties. As we shall see, such ties provided alternative bases of support which were particularly important in ensuring the maintenance of the norms associated with the new social order which was emerging.

Simultaneously, these rituals were used to structure the rājā-viś relationship in hierarchical terms more amenable to the notion of eater and food. For instance, in the vājapeya, the rājañya and the vaiśya were both given cups of madhu or honey, then the vaiśya's cup was exchanged for one of surā or ordinary liquor (SB 5.1.5.28). As a result of this, the yajamāna was thought to be endowed with truth, prosperity and light (satya, śrī and jyotis respectively), while the vaiśya was endowed with the negative attributes of falsehood sin, and darkness or ignorance (anṛta, pāpman, and tamas respectively). In the aśvamedha, likewise (SB 13.2.9.6), the kṣatra and the viś were socially differentiated by being equated with the male and

[16] Instances of this are discussed in Section IV.

female respectively. Given the emergence of gender stratification referred to earlier, the equation of one partner with positive attributes or a dominant social category and the other with negative attributes or a dominated social category would have justified the exploitation of the one by the other, such as would not have been possible if the relationship was envisaged in umbilical terms.

At another level, the rituals legitimating rājya were used to ensure the subordination of the viś. In the rājasūya, for instance (AB 8.36.4), the chants were manipulated to ensure that the viś and the śūdra were subservient.[17] Similarly, the aśvamedha was thought to render the viś obedient and subservient rather than refractory and equal (SB 13.2.2.15, Eggeling 1963e:303). This was sought to be achieved by ascribing the prestigious sacrificial horse to Prajāpati, while the other sacrificial animals were assigned to other deities.[18] As suggested earlier (Chapter II), the need to manipulate rituals to ensure such ends meant that the threat of the viś deserting or challenging the claims of the rājā may have been rather real.

While attempts were made to regulate the rājā-viś relationship through rituals, these were also used to establish ties with those who were probably emerging as the leaders or the dominant members of the viś. These included the grāmaṇī, who was explicitly identified as a prosperous (BSS 17.49, SSS 2.6.7) vaiśya (SB 5.3.1.6), and the sūta (BSS 18.2) who were included in the list of eight vīras or valorous men amongst whom the rājā's abhiṣeka was performed

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[17] Viśam ca eva asmai tat śaudram ca varṇam anuvartmānau kurvanti.

[18] These goals were also sought to be achieved through the agnicayana (SB 9.3.1.16, 10.4.3.22).

(PVB 19.1.4) and who also figured amongst the ratnins or jewels whose support was sought in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.1.5-6).[19]

The role of the rājā vis-a-vis the viś thus underwent a number of changes, reflected primarily in the ritualisation of the tie during the later Vedic phase. During the early Vedic phase, while the rājā and the viś were bound together, the relationship was viewed as natural. However, with the attempt to extend the rājā's sphere of influence to incorporate more and different people within the scope of rājya, certain changes were inevitable. In a sense, this attempt was a means of acquiring access to a range of produce and productive resources. At the same time, to be successful, such an attempt presupposed access to these resources which were often employed and obtained in ritual situations. The need to acquire resources as well as their very acquisition tended to transform the very nature of the rājā-viś relationship, which shifted from one based on a sense of belonging to one another to one of superordination and subordination.

As a result, the relationship of the rājā to the viś underwent a qualitative change. While the importance of the latter for the former continued to be recognised, attempts were constantly made to assert the subordination of the latter. However, the fact that such subordination had to be established and legitimised through rituals, indicates that although the rājā attempted to assert control over some of the resources of the viś, this was not easily acquiesed in. Hence, the rājā had to establish alliances to buttress his claims. One such alliance, especially valuable in a situation where ritual

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[19] The functions attributed to the ratnins and the vīras will be discussed in the next chapter.

provided possibly the most important mechanism of social control, was forged with the brāhmaṇas.

Finally, the rājā's role vis-a-vis the viś, while somewhat similar to that of the śreṣṭha, was, in a sense, more fully developed and more clearly under the control of the former. This role, moreover, contrasted with that of the virāj, who, as noted earlier, was not conceived of as functioning in a situation of social stratification. Thus, the development of this dimension of rājya meant that the rājā was, on the one hand, distancing himself from the ideals associated with vairājya, while on the other hand, he was outdoing the śreṣṭha in his success in establishing a hierarchical relationship vis-a-vis the viś. However, initially at least, this was possible only through the support of the priests. It is on this bond between the brahma and the kṣatra that we will now focus attention.

IV

The brahma-kṣatra relationship, like the kṣatra-viś one, acquired significance during the later Vedic phase, as suggested above, and developed in conjunction with the latter. Here we will suggest that although an alliance of sorts was arrived at, it was a relationship marked by continuous tension, with constant attempts to assert the superiority of the priestly category vis-a-vis kṣatra. We will argue that these insistent assertions reflect a response to the challenge posed by the rājā or the kṣatriya, who, though dependent on priestly support, tried to assert his control over the priesthood, just as he attempted to convert his economic dependence on the viś into a relationship of dominance and subordination.

We had seen (Chapter II) how the brahma-kṣatra/śreṣṭha relationship had been structured through the myths pertaining to Indra on the one hand and through the soma sacrifice and its variants on the other. The brahma-kṣatra/rājā relationship incorporated many of the elements referred to earlier, but was, in some respects, more developed and less overtly hostile.

Given the association of both the divine rājās with kṣatra, it is not surprising that both Varuṇa and Soma were equated with kṣatra vis-a-vis brahma in myths incorporated within the later Vedic tradition. This was, in itself, a new development, as mentioned earlier, contextualising the deities endowed with kṣatra in relation to varṇa categories instead of as wielders of universal power.

As in the case of Indra and Agni, the myths where Varuṇa symbolised kṣatra point to a strained relationship between brahma and kṣatra. In one instance (SB 4.1.4.1-6), Mitra and Varuṇa were equated with kratu and dakṣa (intelligence and skill). They were, moreover, regarded as representatives of brahma and kṣatra, and

while the former was regarded as an abhiyantṛ (conceiver), the latter was a kartṛ or doer. In each of these dualities, the attributes associated with Mitra, and by extension with brahma, were regarded as superior to those of Varuṇa. This is evident from the statement (ibid.) that when the two were separated, Mitra, representing brahma, was able to stand without Varuṇa, representing kṣatra, but not vice versa. Ultimately, Varuṇa requested Mitra to unite with him and agreed to acknowledge his supremacy.[20] The moral of the story was underlined in the human context by the conclusion that while a brāhmaṇa could do without a rājaṅya, although he prospered if he found a rājā, a kṣatriya could not do without a brāhmaṇa, and could not succeed without the latter's assistance.

The Mitra-Varuṇa duo, equated with brahma and kṣatra, were also characterised as masculine and feminine respectively (PVB 25.10.10, SB 2.4.4.19). Somewhat less explicitly, brahma and kṣatra were equated with Mind and Speech (Manas and Vāc, PVB 11.1.2,3), whose unequal relationship has been referred to earlier (Chapter II). Such equations reinforced the notion of an ideal order between the two social categories. At the same time, by equating varṇa with gender categories, they suggested a similarity between the two forms of stratification which may have been useful in "explaining" or justifying both.

If Varuṇa's ultimate subordination suggests parallels with Indra's acquiescence to Agni's claims, there are certain differences as well. As noted earlier, Indra and Agni were regarded as engaged in a contest for establishing sole control over the devas. This

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[20] The myth embodied, at the same time, a modification of the Mitra-Varuṇa relationship, which was envisaged as non-hierarchical in the early Vedic context (Gonda 1972:18-19).

element is relatively muted in the Varuṇa-Mitra myth. Besides, unlike Indra, Varuṇa's opposition to the brahmanical order was not conceived of in terms of brahmahatyā or the destruction of brāhmaṇas. The resolution envisaged, moreover, was in terms of complementarity. In other words, although a conflict was considered possible, its resolution was sought through means other than an explicit physical confrontation. This points to the acknowledged importance of the relationship for both parties, which will be explored further.

The myths about Soma's varṇa affiliations were more or less similar. In one instance (AB 2.10.6), Bṛhaspati and Soma, representing brahma and kṣatra respectively, were thought to be responsible for instigating whatever was done.[21] Here, while the hierarchical order was recognised, it was emphasised that the existence of this order and co-operation between brahma and kṣatra was generally beneficial.

The resolution of the problem of the mutual relationship of the two categories on the mythical plane was, however, clearly not enough to ensure an identical situation of harmony and the subordination of the rājā to the brāhmaṇa in the human context. This is evident from the incorporation of legends within the brahmanical tradition, which reiterated a more or less similar message in more explicit terms. One such legend was that of Vṛṣa Jāna, the purohita of the rājā Tryāruṇa Traivṛṣṇa Aikṣvāka (JB 3.94,95). A dispute took place regarding which one of them was responsible for the death of the son of a brāhmaṇa. Ultimately, responsibility was fixed on the purohita, who avenged himself by preventing the Ikṣvākus from cooking food by casting a spell on their fires. The story ends with the conciliation and propitiation of the angry priest and the restoration of the "proper" order.

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[21] As a corollary, nothing could be done without their instigation.

The characterisation of the hostility of the rājā towards the purohita as self-destructive, implicit in the story, was often carried to its logical conclusion. This is evident in the legend of the rājā Atyarāti Jānantapī (AB 8.39.9), who violated his promise to the brāhmaṇa Vāsiṣṭha Sātyahavya, and was consequently destroyed. That such stories were not simply priestly constructs but formed part of popular perceptions as well, is evident from the frequent use of the theme in the Jātakas.[22]

At the same time, legends and analogies touch on what was the Achilles' heel of the brahmanical position, a weakness which probably provided rājās with a certain amount of leverage and manoeuvrability. This was the dependence of the brāhmaṇas on rājās as gift-debtors vis-a-vis gift-creditors, a spin-off of the exchanges of dakṣiṇā and dāna referred to earlier. While this dependence was rarely overtly acknowledged, it could not be totally suppressed. Thus, in one instance, the devas following Indra were compared to brāhmaṇas following in the train of a rājā (SB 1.2.3.2), while elsewhere (AB 7.35.3), a typical brāhmaṇa was characterised as an ādāyin (i.e., an acceptor of gifts). The subordinate status of the gift-debtor is, moreover, occasionally explicitly referred to in legends such as that of the daughters of Uśanas and Vṛṣaparvan (BDS 2.2.4.26-27), where the daughter of the rājā claims to be superior to the daughter of the brāhmaṇa on the ground that the former's father gives but does not receive, whereas the latter is dependent on his generosity.[23]

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[22] As Ghoshal (1966a:77) observes: "Jātaka stories...prove that the legends of the destruction of kings for insulting brāhmaṇas were so popular that they were used by the Buddhist canonists for inculcating their own ethical teaching."

[23] The story has its parallels in the dialogue between Śarmiṣṭhā and Devayānī in the Mahābhārata (Buhler 1965b:237-238).

While the brāhmaṇa was thus dependent on the rājā, the latter also required the support of the former for legitimating his position and ensuring the subordination of the viś, which justified the appropriation of its resources, as has been widely recognised. Hence it is not surprising that the relationship between the priest and the rājā was articulated through the rituals which legitimated rājya. In this context, the notion of their ideal hierarchical order was reiterated with a certain emphasis on their complementarity.[24]

The ideal hierarchy was created through rituals such as the rājasūya, where the stomas or hymns (PVB 18.10.8) and sāmans or chants (AB 8.36.1) were arranged in a particular order to ensure the brahma preceded the kṣatra, the order being implicitly justified as beneficial to the rāṣṭra (PVB 18.10.8). The notion of precedence, moreover, implied the control of the latter by the former, which was often explicitly regarded as essential for the prosperity of the rāṣṭra (AB 8.37.5).

The benefits which the purohita or the brāhmaṇa could confer on the rājā who accepted his subordinate role were occasionally enumerated. In one instance (AB 8.40.2), the purohita, equated with the protector of the rāṣṭra (rāṣṭragopa), was regarded as capable of conferring svarga loka, kṣatra, bala, rāṣṭra, and viś on the rājā. In other words, it was suggested that the rājā could attain heaven, possess attributes of power and strength, and a sphere of influence, including people, through the intervention

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[24] Very often, the purohita and the rājā were regarded as representatives of the two varṇas, although occasionally, as in the aśvamedha, other brāhmaṇas and rājaṅyas or kṣatriyas could represent the two categories.

and support of the priest.[25]

The role of the priesthood in ensuring support for the rājā was manifest at two, interrelated levels. On the one hand, the priest actively participated in specific rituals such as the abhiṣeka which legitimated the rājā's status in the context of large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya (SB 5.3.5.11, BSS 12.9, ApSS 18.16.2),[26] and the aindramahābhiṣeka (AB 8.39.5). Besides, the rājā's status was officially proclaimed by the priest (SB 5.3.3.12). Thus, the rājā depended on the priesthood for both the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of his authority, and for publicising this. It is this which probably explains the attempts on the part of the rājā to secure the support of the purohita, who was included amongst the vīras (literally valorous men) amongst whom the rājā's abhiṣeka was performed during the rāj ekāha (PVB 19.1.4),[27] and amongst the ratnins whose support was sought during the rājasūya (e.g., SB 5.3.1.2).

At another, broader level, the relationship with the priesthood provided a means whereby the rājā could claim access to the sacred.

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[25] While varṇa-related issues are rarely referred to in the Rg Veda, there is one striking parallel to the connection between the priest and the rājā referred to above. RV(4.50.8,9) states that a rājā who gives precedence to a brāhmaṇa lives happily in his own house, the viś offer him homage, he obtains milch cattle, and the devas protect him.

[26] This possibility was recognised in the epics as well. For instance, the description of Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya refers to his abhiṣeka being performed by Dhaumya and Vyāsa (MBH 2.48.10). The role of the purohita in the abhiṣeka is also reflected in the Jātakas (Ghoshal 1966a:16-17), where he is commonly described as pouring water on the rājā in stereotyped descriptions of the ritual.

[27] This was a one-day soma sacrifice.

As noted earlier, the sacrifice in particular provided the rājā with an occasion to assert his cosmogonic role, and was also important as a means of acquiring control over the produce or productive resources generated by the viś. In such a situation, a certain dependence on the priesthood was inevitable, given their claims to ritual expertise in particular, and their role as mediators between gods and men in general.

Despite their mutual dependence, the relationship between the brahma and kṣatra was often recognised as conflict-ridden in the ritual context. This is evident from the prayer recommended in the rājasūya to ensure that the brahma and the kṣatra protected the sacrificer from one another (AB 7.34.4). Here this hostility was envisaged as stemming from attempts to assert exclusive control over the yajamāna/rājā (ibid.:7.34.5-6).

Occasionally, the tension was sought to be resolved by assertin the unique status of the brāhmaṇa vis-a-vis the rājā. This was particularly true of the proclamation of the rājā in the rājasūya, where the rājā was proclaimed as belonging to a particular viś, whereas Soma was declared to be the rājā of the brāhmaṇas (e.g., SB 5.3.3.12).[28] In other words, the priesthood claimed an ability to establish the crucial rājā-viś connection, and at the same time, asserted their independence of this tie.[29] This independence was

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[28] The same notion is reiterated in the agnicayana (SB 9.4.3.16) and in the epics (e.g., MBH 8.42.42).

[29] Specific ritual variations were also incorporated within the sacrifice to ensure the supremacy of the brāhmaṇa. For instance the use of the trivṛt stoma was prohibited in the rājasūya (PWB 18.10.8), as it was felt that this would lead to the brahma coming under the influence of the kṣatra. The fact that it was not used was thought to ensure that brāhmaṇas could punish those on whom they depended for support.

visualised in terms of an exemption from exploitation--the brāhmaṇa was literally regarded as anādya or not to be eaten, unlike other social categories (e.g., SB 5.3.3.12, 9.4.3.16 etc.).

And yet, escape from the scope of rājya was impossible for the brāhmaṇa in practice. In part this was owing to the fact that just as the brāhmaṇa could use rituals to legitimate rājya, brāhmaṇas themselves acquired a certain status through their ability to conduct such rituals. Hence, their very participation in the sacrifice was symbolic of the bond between the priest and the rājā. In this situation, the rituals which legitimated rājya often provided occasions for differentiating amongst brāhmaṇas as well. The most outstanding example of this is provided by the daśapeya, which formed a part of the rājasūya. This was a variation of the soma sacrifice in which ten brāhmaṇas participated. Each of them was supposed to be a soma drinker, and was ideally expected to possess ten similarly qualified ancestors (PVB 18.9.4, SB 5.4.5.4, ApSS 18.21.3). While it was recognised that these genealogical connections could be difficult to establish, [30] the insistence on such ancestry meant that only a select category of brāhmaṇas could aspire to officiate at the sacrifice. In this context, the exclusive status of the rājā who could secure the presence of such men as well as that of the brāhmaṇas who "proved" their ancestry by participating in the ceremony would be made obvious to competitors, whether rājās, or brāhmaṇas, as well as to all who witnessed or heard about the sacrifice.[31]

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[30] The SB (5.4.5.4) suggested an alternative of referring to ten deities in case the names of ten ancestors were not known.

[31] The insistence on a Bhārgava hotr for the rājasūya (PVB 18.9.2, BSS 12.18, SSS 15.12.2) probably had similar implications.

At the same time, other means for resolving or containing the disruptive potential of the relationship were explored. These included establishing an embryonic relationship between the two and claiming superiority for the brahma on the ground that it constituted the yoni or womb of the kṣatra (BAU 1.4.11). In a sense, this provided the rājā with an alternative to the earlier embryonic connection--that with the viś.[32]

In more concrete terms, the purohita evidently attempted to strengthen his hold over the rājā by constantly reiterating the importance of his role between the gods and the rājā. Thus, the appointment of a purohita was regarded as basic for the fulfilment of the sacred duties of the rājā. This is evident from the notion that the devas did not eat the offerings made by a rājā who was without a purohita (AB 8.40.1) and in the insistence on the appointment of a purohita (BDS 1.10.18.7, VDS 19.3).[33] At another level, this is reflected in the recommended use of the purohita's pravara for the rājā (ASS 12.15.4, ApSS 2.16.10). This implied that the rājā's own genealogical connections were considered inadequate for obtaining

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[32] Viewing the form but not the content of the relationship somewhat differently, Heesterman (1957:226-227) observes: "The distinctive feature of Indian kingship is the intimate connection of royal and priestly power, the marriage-like bond between the king and a brahman, his purohita... There is, however, yet another not less important marriage-like bond, the one established between the king and the people... The relation king-people was ruled out of the game in favour of the relation king-brahman."

[33] Occasionally, the specific functions of the purohita are enumerated as assisting the rājā in battle, equipping him with the required armour, and chanting verses to ensure his success (AGS 3.12.1-12). That these claims had a certain validity in practice is evident from the Jātakas, where purohitas are described as conducting sacrifices, interpreting omens, and participating in warfare (Ghoshal 1966a:24).

access to the sacred, and hence had to be abandoned in favour of a priestly genealogy. However, there may have been some resistance to this. Hence, an alternative genealogy, meant for rājaṅyas, was accorded recognition within the tradition (e.g., ASS 12.15.5, ApSS 2.16.12).[34]

In other cases, an effort was made to suggest a more or less identical status for both. For instance, rituals such as the ṛtapeya (BSS 18.35) point to an attempt to achieve a balance between the rājā and the purohita.[35] This attempt is significant, as it points to the fact that priestly claims to supremacy may not have been universally upheld, and had hence to be modified to accommodate the growing power of the rājā.[36]

A more or less equal status for the brahma and the kṣatra was also suggested in the context of the aśvamedha. Here, the brāhmaṇa and the rājaṅya lute-players who were expected to sing the praises of the sacrificer were, at the same time, envisaged as protecting him from both sides (SB 13.1.5.3). This would imply the sharing of a common function by the members of the two varṇas, even if the manner in which they fulfilled their designated roles was different.

The notion of different but equal status was, moreover, reiterated through general statements in the later Vedic and post-Vedic

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[34] This consisted of a reference to Manu, Ila and Pururavas.

[35] Apart from its overt purpose, the very name of the ritual is significant, suggesting as it does the appropriation of the right to define ṛta by the performers. It is likely that this exclusive claim to defining ṛta contained the potential for distorting its earlier, universalistic, nature. The myth which justified the ritual at the same time reinforced the indraisation of rājya, referred to earlier, by equating the yajamāna/rājā with Indra, while the priest was equated with Agni.

[36] Other rituals such as the pañcaśāradīya (BSS 18.11), and the vājapeya (SB 5.1.1.11, LSS 8.11.1) were recommended for either a brāhmaṇa or a rājā or rājaṅya, suggesting that their ritual status was identical.

brahmanical tradition. For instance, both the rājā and the śrotriya or learned brāhmaṇa were regarded as dhṛtavrata (upholders of the social order, SB 5.4.4.5). Elsewhere (GDS 8.3), both were thought to ensure prasūti or reproduction, and were conceived of as supports for the three basic categories of beings--the devas, pitṛs, and manuṣyas, gods, patrilineal ancestors, and men respectively (ibid.: 11.29).

While this occasionally extended to an actual sharing of functions, as for instance in the possibility of punishment administered by the rājā or penances prescribed by the ācārya or the purohita for similar offences (e.g., ADS 2.5.10.14),[37] there are indications that actual power was being concentrated in the hands of the rājā.[38] This is evident from repeated attempts to assert the sanctity of the property (e.g., BDS 1.5.11.13, GDS 28.42, VDS 17.84) and lives (e.g., BDS 1.10.18.11, GDS 10.17) of brāhmaṇas. As noted earlier (Chapter I), the Jātaka stories suggest that both assertions were challenged in practice.

That this was the case is also suggested by attempts to define the scope of the power of the rājā vis-a-vis brāhmaṇas. In the Dharma Sūtras, for instance, the brāhmaṇas no longer claim to be beyond the jurisdiction of the rājā, but attempt to regulate his intervention by delimiting legitimate and illegitimate activities. While the latter included destroying or appropriating the lives or

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[37] For instance, the thief could either go to the rājā, or commit suicide (ADS 1.9.25.6) or perform the kṛcchra penance for a year (ibid.:1.9.25.8).

[38] Anjaria (1935:199-200), for instance, characterises the arrangement as "a sort of 'entente cordiale' between the king and the brāhmaṇa, whereby, though the privileges of the latter were recognised, political power was really vested in the king."

property of brāhmaṇas as mentioned above, the former included ensuring that brāhmaṇas performed their duty (e.g., BDS 2.4.7.15, VDS 3.4.),[39] Hence, although brāhmaṇas claimed an exclusive right to define dharma (BDS 1.1.1.14, GDS 28.51, VDS 1.4)[40] their dependence on the rājā for the implementation of these norms was obvious.

The role of the rājā vis-a-vis brāhmaṇas was thus changing during the period under consideration. The shifts which are evident can be broadly enumerated as follows--an initial stage, reflected in the early Vedic tradition, when defining the relationship between the rājā and the brāhmaṇa was unimportant. This was followed by a stage where the relationship assumed importance for both. During this phase, typified by the myths, legends and rituals of the later Vedic tradition, each sought the support of the other for different reasons. At the same time, each attempted to free himself from the element of subordination inherent in a supportive relationship in a stratified social context.[41] While the attempts of the rājā to break away from the relationship are not explicitly recorded within the brahmanical tradition (for obvious reasons), such attempts are hinted at in the undercurrent of tension which runs through the data analysed above. We had suggested that the rājā may have used

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[39] As an extension of this, Vedic learning came to a standstill on the death of the rājā (GDS 16.32).

[40] Virtually the sole exception to this occurs in the ADS (2.11.29.15), where the right to define dharma is extended to all social categories.

[41] An example of the kinds of conflicts this created is provided by the legend of Janaka, where the brāhmaṇas describe him by the contemptuous term rājaṅya bandhu when referring to him amongst themselves (SB 11.6.2.5), but refer to him as a samrāj when addressing him directly (ibid.:11.6.2.2).

his control over gift-exchanges to assert his control over brāhmaṇas. At another level, it is likely that the option of opting out of the ritual framework, which was the basis of the brāhmaṇa's power, was occasionally exercised. This could be achieved by proposing alternative definitions of the sacred, as was attempted, for instance, by Ajātaśatru (BAU 2.1.15) and Aśvapati Kaikeya (CU 5.18.1-5) and implicitly challenging the brahmanical claims to a monopoly in this sphere. By far the most outstanding of such challenges were posed by the Buddha and Mahāvīra, who, apart from being kṣatriyas, provided an alternative to the brahmanical faith which was evidently attractive to contemporary rulers.

The shifts in the brahmanical position vis-a-vis the rājā, referred to above, were probably the result of such challenges. While these could be denounced, this alone was not adequate to contain them. Hence, compromises stressing complementarity and "permitting" the rājā to intervene in a range of issues were devised. While the notion of permission may have been euphemistic, the rājā, on his part, rarely attempted to pull down what was a convenient facade for his growing power vis-a-vis the brāhmaṇas.

What is evident then is that the brāhmaṇa-rājā relationship ultimately shifted in favour of the rājā. This was, moreover, a new development--as we had noted, the śreṣṭha, and by extension the adhipati and the svarāj, did not at any stage, aspire to or achieve such a position. Nevertheless, it is likely that the conflicts with the śreṣṭha, referred to earlier, predisposed brāhmaṇas to accept a more limited role in the political domain and to settle for an alliance which accorded them a certain recognition. For the rājā, likewise, it was preferable to have the brāhmaṇas as

allies rather than as antagonists, as the priests had access to communication networks not only with the gods, but with men as well.[42] Hence, while the nature of the bond was occasionally questioned by both parties, the need for the bond itself was never denied.

[42] The means whereby the priests established such communication networks and the political significance of these ties will be explored subsequently.

V

In the preceding sections we explored two inter-related socio-political processes which contributed significantly to the emergence of rājya. Implicit in the discussion were two major issues around which these processes crystallised--the control over economic resources on the one hand, and the control over and the institutionalisation of religious beliefs on the other. We had also touched on the connections between the two, noting how claims to access to the sacred provided a mechanism for appropriating material resources, and how these in turn may have provided the basis for challenging old and/or creating new definitions of the sacred. At the same time, the range of both these spheres was expanding. In other words, new economic activities, including commercial activities, and craft specialisation, were acquiring importance, and new definitions of the sacred, including ritual learning and mystic insight, were coming into focus. What is also significant is that although the three major socio-political categories identified in the course of the discussion--the rājā/kṣatriya, the viś/vaiśya, and the brāhmaṇa--attempted to establish a monopoly over at least one of the two spheres referred to above, none of them could actually do so. Hence, although the status quo was not overthrown, it was probably challenged almost continuously.[43]

It is in this context that the attempt to either assign an overarching social authority to the rājā, or the assertion of

[43] While some of these challenges have been referred to in the preceding sections, other, less overt, but none the less significant challenges will be discussed in Chapter VII.

such a claim by the rājā needs to be viewed.[44] This was one of the means of widening the basis of legitimating rājya by defining it not simply as something which could be acquired through specific rituals relevant in a particular context, but as something which was beneficial to and necessary for the entire social order. While the definition of the social order had a number of dimensions, we will focus here on the role which the rājā acquired vis-a-vis the varṇa hierarchy as a whole, and which distinguished rājya from other forms of leadership/rulership referred to earlier.

Given the paucity of references to Varuṇa and Soma in varṇa-defined contexts, noted earlier, it is not surprising that neither of the divine rājās was associated with either creating or with maintaining the entire varṇa hierarchy. However, the later Vedic and post-Vedic context was qualitatively different from the early Vedic situation in which the core of the myths pertaining to Varuṇa and Soma was probably developed. So, for the human rājā, attempting to extend his influence during the period under consideration, it was clearly important to assert a role vis-a-vis the new social order. Later Vedic rituals which legitimated rājya were therefore conceived of as a means of incorporating all four varṇas within the purview of the rājā and of establishing what was defined as the "proper" hierarchical order amongst them.

The most outstanding example of this was provided by the rājasūya, where the use of four distinct stomas or chants[45] symbolic

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[44] These processes meed not have been mutually exclusive. In other words, the assertion of such a claim by the rājā may have been accorded recognition within the brahmanical tradition and would then appear in the historical record as a prescription or a duty which would be assigned to the rājā.

[45] The trivṛt, pañcadaśa, saptadaśa, and ekaviṁśa stomas respectively.

of the brahma, kṣatra, viś, and śūdra (AB 8.36.4), who were conceived of as endowed with tejas, vīrya, prajāti and pratiṣṭhā (lustre, valour, procreative power, and stability) respectively,[46] represented the incorporation of the four varṇas, with what were defined as their proper attributes. At the same time, the ritual was viewed as a means of ensuring that the last two varṇas were subordinate and dependent. This was sought to be achieved by a specific arrangement of the chants (ibid.). A similar attempt to ensure support and subordination at the same time is also evident in the participation of functionaries like the govikartr and the pālagāla, who were probably śūdras (R.S.Sharma 1980:55). They were incorporated within the list of ratnins whose support was sought through the ritual, but their presence had to be expiated by a propitiatory offering to Soma and Rudra (SB 5.3.2.2), to overcome the sin incurred through contact with ayajñīyas (literally those not worthy of participating in the sacrifice).[47] Besides, as noted earlier (Chapter IV), the passing of the sacrificial sword for preparing the dicing ground was also used as a means of establishing a hierarchical order amongst the ratnins, with those classified as śūdras ranking lowest.[48] In other instances, (e.g.

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[46] In the context of the odanasava (BSS 18.9), the varṇas were conceived of in more or less similar terms, as associated with tejas, ojas, payas and āyu (lustre, strength, milk, and longevity respectively).

[47] Not surprisingly, in the description of Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya in the Mahābhārata, it is explicitly stated that no śūdras could approach the sacred place (MBH 2.33.9), although elsewhere (ibid.:2.30.41), respectable śūdras (mānyān śūdrān) figure amongst the invitees.

[48] As R.S.Sharma (1980:57) observes: "There is nothing to indicate that their presence secured the representation of the whole śūdra varṇa, but certainly some sections of that community could find a place in the polity."

the aśvamedha, SB 13.1.9.1,2), only the first two varṇas were expected to benefit from the performance of the ritual.[49] Thus, the rituals which legitimated rājya were at the same time regarded as a means of incorporating and defining the social order of which the rājā formed a part.

It is obvious that there were problems in the attempt to resolve the rājā's relationship to the varṇa order through rituals. While the participation of the representatives of the varṇas could be assured if this was viewed as a recognition of their importance, it may have been less forthcoming if this was explicitly treated as a means of ensuring their subordination. We have mentioned the constant fear of the viś deserting the rājā. As we shall see, the fear of the śūdra attempting to gain access to and hence challenging the ritual framework was almost as strong in the post-Vedic brahmanical tradition. Besides, from the perspective of the rājā, dependence on rituals to manipulate or regulate the social order meant, in effect, a greater dependence on brāhmaṇas, which would have curtailed his effective authority. In such a situation, the need for alternative means of organising the relationship amongst the emerging social categories was probably experienced at a number of levels.

It is likely that the recognition of the maintenance of the varṇāśrama dharma as one of the unique duties of the rājā (e.g., GDS 11.9)[50] was the result of these explorations. While

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[49] Here brahmavarcas or priestly lustre was conferred on the brāhmaṇa, while the rājaṅya was thought to acquire śaurya or valour.

[50] In some instances (e.g., VDS 19.7), the definition of varṇa dharma was qualified in terms of deśa, jāti, and kula dharma, i.e., the precepts and practices specific to particular regions, social categories, and families.

theoretically the brahmanical authorities retained a certain control through their claims to define dharma referred to earlier, this may have been less than what was directly exercised in the ritual context. Besides, they themselves were brought within the framework of varṇāśrama dharma, with the rājā being granted or asserting the right to enforce norms for them as well.

Given the scope of varṇa, within which all social categories were or could be theoretically encompassed, and the āśrama system, which spanned the major part of the life cycle of men belonging to the first three varnas, the rājā's social role was envisaged as potentially almost all-pervasive. And yet, there were obvious limits to the rājā's ability to intervene and enforce norms throughout society. These would have been related to problems of communications and resources. The implementation of such norms required a well-established system of communication, whereby violations could be brought to the notice of the rājā and effectively redressed. This in turn implied the existence of an organisational network and the effective mobilisation of resources to maintain it. Although the rājā was associated with a supportive network,[51] effective intervention in or surveillance of the day-to-day lives of people would have presented practical problems. While these are not explicitly acknowledged, they are implicit in the discussion on the implementation or enforcement of varṇa-related norms within the brahmanical tradition.

As is well-known, the Dharma Sūtras (and following them the Dharma Śāstras) lay down certain duties or occupations which were specific to the various varṇas. These included acquiring learning,

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[51] For details, see Chapter VI.

getting sacrifices performed and giving gifts which were common to men of the first three varṇas (e.g., BDS 1.10.18.2-4), teaching, performing sacrifices, and receiving gifts, which were specific to brāhmaṇas (ibid.:1.10.18.2), the protection of people and acquiring wealth through warfare, prescribed for the rājaṅya, or kṣatriya (e.g., GDS 10.7,20), agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade, prescribed for the vaiśya (ibid.:10.49), and serving the members of the three higher varṇas, prescribed for the śūdra (BDS 1.10.18.5). While ideally none of these prescriptions were to be violated, we find that punishments were prescribed for only some of them.[52]

Both the issues which were selected for the intervention of the rājā and those which were tacitly recognised as being outside his purview are significant. In the first category, efforts were made to regulate ritual norms, with the rājā being expected to ensure that brāhmaṇas in particular fulfilled their prescribed duties as noted earlier. Punishments were prescribed for those who deviated from the norm (e.g., VDS 3.4), as well as for members of other varṇas, especially śūdras, who attempted to challenge the prescribed pattern in this sphere (e.g., GDS 12.4-6).

The other area of concern related to safeguarding the control over productive resources by individual men in general (e.g., ADS 2.10.26.4-8) and the privileges of brāhmaṇas in particular (e.g., GDS 12.35),[53] with theft being punished with varying degrees

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[52] Apart from this, the provision of āpaddharma provided a convenient escape route whereby violations of the norms could be condoned within certain limits.

[53] At the same time, brāhmaṇas who violated such norms could be severely punished. For instance, the BDS (1.10.18.18) prescribed branding with hot iron for a brāhmaṇa who stole gold.

of severity. Besides, the rājā was conceived of as regulating, or rather preventing sexual unions, and by extension, procreation, amongst varṇas (e.g., BDS 2.2.4.7, GDS 23.14-16, VDS 21.1-5) with the death penalty being prescribed for most violations.

The process whereby these three areas were identified as of crucial significance to the definition of varṇa and to the role of the rājā vis-a-vis the varṇa-based order is not explicitly discussed, but may be tentatively surmised. In the case of rituals, their value in terms of communicating and legitimating notions of socio-political hierarchy rested, to an extent, on their being strictly controlled. After all, if rituals were performed by or were accessible to everyone, their exclusive nature and hence their usefulness in legitimating a stratified social order would have been lost. Hence, the attempt to regulate access to rituals/ritual learning in particular, and the domain of the sacred in general, is not surprising. Besides, as suggested earlier, brāhmaṇas may have attempted to define the areas in which the rājā could legitimately intervene, and probably sought to restrict the ruler's role to upholding the domain of the sacred.

The second area identified, recognising the access of individuals to productive resources, is significant in accepting a new definition of economic relations, where participants were no longer bound together by ties of gift-exchange. In a sense, as noted earlier (Chapter IV), the very nature of such exchanges, especially as structured in the ritual context, permitted the consolidation and concentration of resources, which were withdrawn from general circulation. At the same time, there were other processes at work permitting the generation and concentration of resources outside

the framework envisaged in the later Vedic tradition, where, as noted earlier, the basic resources were defined as anna and paśu. As is evident from the archaeological evidence, and from Buddhist and Jain traditions, the Ganga valley was witnessing the beginnings of trade, craft specialisation and urbanisation during the period under consideration. While some of the resources generated by these processes may have been tapped within the ritual framework, others may not have been amenable to similar control. Thus, the relation of the rājā to those who controlled such resources had to be established on a different basis. One such basis was the recognition and protection of those who had acquired such resources,[54] this in turn enabling the rājā to secure both social acceptance and material benefits.

The third area, regulating sexual relations and procreation, was, in a sense, linked to the concerns of the second. We have seen that offspring were frequently viewed as desirable, being encompassed within the definition of material well-being. Control over sexuality, especially female sexuality and procreative powers, was, in part, a mechanism for ensuring control over procreation. Hence, distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate unions, and according recognition to the former, acknowledged the claims of men over women, just as the claims of the former to productive resources was accorded recognition.[55]

At the same time, a number of elements of varṇadharma were left undeveloped. For instance, there are no references to

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[54] As we shall see (Chapter VI), this provided one of the earliest justifications for the systematic levy of taxes.

[55] Other links between the rājya and gender stratification will be explored in Section VII below, and in Chapter VIII.

punishing kṣatriyas or vaiśyas who did not make gifts or did not perform sacrifices. Nor are there references to punishments for śūdras who did not serve members of the higher varṇas or for vaiśyas who did not follow their prescribed occupations. In other words, the rājā could not, or was not expected to interfere in a number of spheres. This amounted to a tacit recognition of the autonomy of social categories vis-a-vis these issues. While this may have been dictated by considerations of expediency, it is also likely that the areas identified as crucial to the definition and implementation of varṇadharma were selected because they permitted the consolidation of a new, socially differentiated support base for the rājā.

Thus, while the ritual or theological support of brāhmaṇas continued to be important, others, especially men who were gaining access to new and/or concentrating more established forms of resources within their individual control, were also conciliated. We had seen (Chapter IV, Chapter V, Section II), how the process of socio-economic differentiation may have, in part, resulted from some of the relationships envisaged for the rājā in the sacrificial context. This, as well as independent processes, led to the emergence of a more complex social order. In coming to terms with these changes, the rājā's simple bonds with the viś were diversified to incorporate distinct ties with different social categories.

The maintenance of such a position required the constant reiteration of the connection between the rājā and his new supporters. In the next two sections, we will explore how this was attempted by locating the rājā within the context of specific elements of the kinship structure and gender stratification.

The importance of conflicts which were defined in kinship terms as well as the tendency to obtain support from certain specific kinsmen by strengthening the ties which bound them has been referred to earlier in the analysis of śraiṣṭhya (Chapter II). We had also seen how similar elements were extended to the definition of ādhipatya and svārājya and had suggested that this was an indication of the importance of the issues and social relations involved. What is also noteworthy is that not only could kinsmen (and women) offer support or resistance to leaders who aspired to extend their sphere of influence, but that the kinship patterns which were recognised as valuable for such leaders or rulers could, at the same time, provide a more general model. As we shall see, efforts were made to define such patterns of support for the rājā and extend these as normative for others. Alternatively, efforts were made to identify the rājā with a more hierarchically ordered kinship structure and to cement the bonds between him and those who were emerging into importance within this structure. This provided a new basis of identity between the rājā and at least some of those who were incorporated within his sphere of influence, and was hence an innovative means of winning support and legitimacy. In other words, we will be examining the development of an elaborate, pervasive analogy, which was used to both describe and explain or justify a changing relationship to power.

As in the case of the varṇa hierarchy, the divine rājās and their established attributes contained very limited possibilities in this sphere. In fact, very often, their attributes were conceived as negative in the changed circumstances. In other instances, the definition of the role of the human rājā vis-a-vis kinship structures

extended far beyond what was envisaged for these deities. This is evident from both rituals and incidental references. Moreover, Indra, and to a lesser extent, Prajāpati, were viewed as more useful models for the human rājā. As suggested earlier, these shifts reflect historical developments, which we will explore.

The divine rājās, as noted earlier (Chapter IV), were commonly conceived of in terms of the categories with whom they shared a common identity, defined as the devas or Ādityas in the case of Varuṇa, and plants in the case of Soma. Such conceptualisations suggested an underlying similarity and a relatively egalitarian relationship. On the human plane, the closest parallel to such a concept could have been provided by the svā or samāna with whom leaders such as the śreṣṭha were associated.

However, we had seen (Chapter IV) that the human rājā, unlike the śreṣṭha, was rarely identified in terms of the kin group consisting of the svā or samāna.[56] More important, the rituals which legitimated rājya were also used to establish a hierarchical relationship between the rājā and such kinsfolk. For instance, although the svā or the janya could participate in the abhiṣeka during the rājasūya (e.g., SB 5.3.5.12), he often ranked last (e.g, BSS 12.9, ApSS 18.16.5) after representatives of the first three varṇas.[57] The sajāta (literally one sharing an identical birth) was also assigned the lowest rank in the order established through

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[56] One of the few instances in which such an identification was hinted at occurs in the BSS (14.17), where the man who obtains the rāṣṭra is equated with the vasiṣṭha amongst samānas.

[57] Further, the svā was excluded from the ritual of mounting the various directions, where the support of different social categories was sought for the rājā (SB 5.4.1.3-7).

the passing of the sacrificial sword for preparing the diving ground (SB 5.4.4.19), which, as noted earlier, was envisaged as a means of establishing the proper social order. Besides, his cattle were appropriated in the course of the mock cattle-raid. What seems evident is that the human rājā attempted to deny the importance of

that of fighting, along with Indra and Agni against Vṛtra (SB 2.6.4.2-4) and of protecting the sacrifice, along with Mitra, from the asuras and rakṣas (AB 6.27.1). However, these associations were rather untypical and could not be developed further.

The attempt to both negate and at the same time appropriate the qualities associated with Varuṇa reflect the contradictory pulls and pressures at work, as does the very conceptualisation of the deva-asura/Indra-Vṛtra struggle as ambiguous, as mentioned earlier. While an attempt was made to deny the importance of the values associated with Varuṇa, who was, by and large, more egalitarian and virāj-like, this alone was considered inadequate to cope with the complexities of the situation. In other words, the rājā/yajamāna, although attempting to acquire support on a different basis, could not completely deny the importance of earlier bases of support. Hence, an attempt was made to appropriate the qualities associated with the deity in a stratified social context.

The position of Soma, although not identical, was somewhat similar. Like Varuṇa, he was envisaged as endowed with the positive quality of āsurya (e.g., RV 6.74.1) in the early Vedic tradition. Besides, while Soma was invoked against a variety of enemies such as the amitra (ibid.:9.11.7), rakṣas (ibid.:9.17.3), śatru (ibid.: 9.19.6), Dasyus (ibid.:9.41.2), and abhimāti (ibid.:9.65.15), his invocation as a killer of Vṛtra (e.g., RV 1.91.5) derived more from his association with Indra, and was not intrinsic to his characterisation (Deshmukh 1933:286).[58] What is more, he was

[58] Even in the later Vedic tradition, Soma was occasionally associated with the killing of Vṛtra (SB 2.5.4.4).

explicitly identified with Vṛtra in the later Vedic tradition (e.g., SB 3.4.3.13), with the pressing and offering of Soma being equated with the killing of Vṛtra (ibid.:1.1.4.8).

The contrast between the mythical/ritual association of the divine rājās and the attributes associated with their human counterparts could not be more striking. Virtually all the rituals which legitimated rājya were conceived of as representations of the deva-asura/Indra-Vṛtra struggle on the one hand, and were regarded as the means of enabling the rājā to overcome his bhrātṛvya/sapatna on the other. For instance, the destruction of the bhrātṛvya or sapatna was recognised as a more or less consistent goal of the rājasūya (e.g., ApSS 18.9.9),[59] this being equated with the destruction of Vṛtra (PVB 18.11.1, SB 5.2.3.7). A specific prayer was offered during the abhiṣeka, moreover, in order to render the sacrificer free from sapatnas and bhrātṛvyas (SB 5.4.2.3). Similar associations are evident in the aśvamedha as well. Here, the sviṣṭakṛt offering was described as a means whereby the devas killed the asuras (ibid.:13.3.4.2) and hence as a means of ensuring a similar fate for the bhrātṛvya of the yajamāna.

What is also significant is the building up of an association between the attainment of the rāṣṭra or the status of a rājā and the killing of Vṛtra. For instance, in the rājasūya, it was declared that Indra became a rājā after killing Vṛtra (ApSS 18.11.1). The sacrificer was, moreover, endowed with Indra's characteristic weapon the vajra (BSS 12.9), in the course of the ritual. This notion

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[59] In this case, this was envisaged as the specific outcome of performing the cāturmāsyas as part of the rājasūya.

was extended to the formula which accompanied the offerings during the ratnīnāmhavīṁśi (e.g., BSS 12.5), where the ratnins were expected to declare "This is our rājā, the killer of Vṛtra, may he, on becoming a rājā, kill Vṛtra."[60]

We had noted certain elements which characterised the deva-asura and Indra-Vṛtra and yajamāna-bhrātṛvya/sapatna struggle. Essentially, these were conceived of as struggles between more or less similarly endowed kinsmen belonging to the same generation. These struggles, moreover, were regarded as revolving around access to economic resources, political domination, access to the cult, and cosmogonic functions. Clearly, at one level, the human rājā was associated with these concerns through the ritual, appropriating the role of the śreṣṭha, often through an explicit identification of the sacrificer with Indra and his kinsman-enemy with Vṛtra.[61]

At another level, the conceptualisation of the typical divine rājā Soma, and, to a lesser extent Varuṇa, as Vṛtra, was a new development in at least two respects. On the one hand, this marked a shift from the early Vedic identifications of these deities in that they were now associated with what were, from one perspective,

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[60] Ayam naḥ rājā vṛtrahā, rājā bhūtvā vṛtram vadhyāt iti. The link between acquiring a rāṣṭra and destroying one's bhrātṛvya was also suggested in rituals such as the viśvāmitra saṁjaya, a four-day soma sacrifice, by means of which Viśvāmitra was supposed to have acquired a rāṣṭra (PVB 21.12.2,3). This ritual was also recommended for the bhrātṛvyavat.

[61] It is likely that the struggle against the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna explains the relative marginalisation of the brother of the rājā in rituals. Although the rājabhrātṛ was regarded as one of the eight vīras amongst whom the rāja's abhiṣeka was performed during the rāj ekāha (PVB 19.1.4), he did not figure amongst the ratnins, nor was he amongst the kinsfolk whose participation was required for the aśvamedha.

evil or ambiguous attributes. On the other hand, this very association meant that their position vis-a-vis the developing ritual tradition of the later Vedic phase was changing, with their attributes being either marginalised, as in the case of Varuṇa, or appropriated completely, as in the case of Soma.[62] The Soma-Vṛtra identification has been explained as symbolic of the appropriation of the powers of a vanquished enemy (Drury 1981:35-37).[63] While this is likely, the shift needs to be viewed within the context of the definition of rājya, where, on the one hand, the human rājā was being conceived of as opposed to Vṛtra,[64] while on the other hand, his divine counterparts were being assimilated to Vṛtra. As noted earlier (Chapter II), the Indra-Vṛtra struggle was, at the same time, viewed as ambiguous.

We had suggested that part of this ambiguity was explicable in terms of the destruction of relatively egalitarian ties of kinship. It is also likely that this was due to the implicit abandonment of the values or roles associated with the rājā in the early Vedic context, as typified by Varuṇa and Soma, and their replacement by

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[62] The tension inherent in the transition is reflected in the occasional characterisation of Varuṇa and Soma as hostile deities. For instance, Varuṇa was thought to inflict all the distress experienced on earth (SB 4.5.7.7), while a prayer was offered to Soma (AB 1.3.2), to ensure that he did not injure the prajā and paśu of the sacrificer. It is likely that the deities were envisaged as hostile in a situation where the values associated with them were being negated.

[63] To cite Drury (ibid.): "Little imagination is required to make the original King Soma a human being, an enemy king or warrior whose life was forfeited by defeat, and whose essence must be partaken of because of the belief that partaking of the remains of a powerful man (or god) transfers his power to oneself."

[64] The human rājā was occasionally associated with the destruction of Vṛtra in the early Vedic tradition as well (e.g., RV 5.37.4,5),

different norms and ideals. Clearly, the rājā who was being identified with the killer of Vṛtra or Soma, and possibly Varuṇa, was beginning to be associated with different bases of support. To some extent at least, this meant the denial or weakening of the support provided by the relatively egalitarian kinship ties, and their replacement by seeking and obtaining the support of those who were acquiring positions of importance within a more hierarchically ordered kinship structure.

The possibility that the weakening or transformation of the bonds between kinsmen belonging to the same generation necessitated the development of other kin-based ties which were more amenable to a hierarchical order had been explored earlier. Amongst the bonds between kinsmen which we had specifically identified, that between father and son in particular, and patrilineal kin in general were the most important. Not surprisingly, these were regarded as crucial for the human rājā as well.

Of the divine rājās, Varuṇa's association with patriliny are rather infrequent. In fact, the mythology of Varuṇa in particular and the Ādityas in general was based on the recognition of matrilineal connections with the common mother Aditi. Varuṇa was thus conceived of as the son of a mother rather than of a father. Besides, he was rarely conceived of in paternalistic terms.[65] This would indicate that initially, patrilineal connections may not have been particularly important for the rājā.

The other divine rājā, Soma, like Agni, was often conceived of as both the father (e.g., RV 9.86.10) and the son (e.g., RV 9.110.10) of the invoker or sacrificer. While his origins were

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[65] In a sense, this ties in with his ambiguous role in procreative processes, referred to earlier.

not explored systematically in myths, he was occasionally described as Prajāpati's son (SB 11.1.6.14) and was associated with the pitṛs, being referred to as pitṛpīta (i.e., drunk by the pitṛs, e.g., ApSS 1.8.3). In other words, although he was occasionally conceived of in patrilineal terms, this was not very systematically developed.

The human rājā, on the other hand, was consistently associated with patrilineal genealogies, which were reiterated during the rituals which legitimated rājya. For instance, the yajamāna was proclaimed as the putra and pautra, i.e., the son and grandson of his father and patrilineal grandfather, in the rājasūya (BSS 12.8). The genealogy was extended to the patrilineal great grandfather in the vājapeya (ibid.:11.7). While the connection with the mother was also acknowledged in the former ritual (SB 5.3.3.12, ApSS 18.16.15), this was recognised only for a single generation. In other words, while matrilineal ties were not denied, patrilineal ties were recognised as both more significant and enduring.[66]

While the establishment and recognition of patrilineal ties were viewed as a means of legitimating claims to rājya, incidental references in legends indicate that these were by no means universally acknowledged. This is evident from the controversy regarding the use of the syllables bhuḥ, bhuvar, and svar in the context of the punarābhiṣeka (AB 8.37.3), it being felt that they could be used between one and three times depending on whether it was desired

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[66] Patrilineal connections would have also been reiterated through the incorporation of variations of the soma sacrifice in such rituals. However, that patrilineal connections alone were not regarded as sufficient to ensure claims to rājya is evident from the story of Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana (SB 12.9.3.1-2) who was driven away from a daśapuruṣa rājya, a rājya controlled for ten generations, ultimately regaining it through the performance of a sacrifice (ibid.:12.9.3.13).

that the yajamāna should prosper for one or three generations. While this was supposed to have been opposed by everyone except Uddālaka Āruṇi and Satyakāma Jābala, it is their names and their point of view which was recorded and recognised within the brahmanical tradition.

The rituals which legitimated rājya were also used as a means of strengthening the father-son bond. For instance, in the rājasūy (SB 5.4.2.8), the yajamāna gave the vessel containing the fluid used for the consecration to a priya putra (beloved son) to enable him to continue the vīrya (valorous acts) of the father. In the same context, the father-son bond was reversed and restored (ibid.: 5.4.2.9) to ensure that both prospered.[67] At another level, the importance of sons in general was emphasised. This was done throug statements used during the recitation of the Śunaḥśepa legend, for instance (e.g., AB 7.33.1-6) which declared a wife to be a companio a daughter to be a source of misery, while the son was regarded as a light in the world beyond.[68] Besides, sons of the rājā (rāja-putras) as well as sons of important functionaries such as the sūta, grāmaṇī, ksattṛ, and saṁgrahitṛ, were given the role of prote ting the sacrificial horse during the aśvamedha (e.g., SB 13.1.6.2, 13.4.2.5, SSS 16.1.16 etc.). In other words, patrilineal identity was recognised as ritually significant not only for the rājā, but for others as well.

The emphasis on patrilineal genealogies was most explicit in the case of the priests who participated in the daśapeya, where, as

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[67] The rājā's son also figured amongst the eight vīras or valorous men whose presence was required for the abhiṣeka of the rāja during the rāj ekāha (PVB 19.1.4).

[68] Sakhā ha jāyā, kṛpanam ha duhitā, jyotiḥ ha putraḥ parame vyoman.

noted earlier (Section IV), efforts were made to trace a genealogy through men related to either the father or to both parents for ten generations (e.g., ASS 9.3.20,21, SSS 15.14.8, LSS 9.2.5 etc.). While this has been viewed as a means of rounding off the year and ensuring the continuity of the ancestral line (Heesterman 1957:187), the selection of a single category of ancestors meant that they alone would be accorded importance to the exclusion of others.

What is interesting is that this attempt to establish a patrilineal genealogy was evidently challenged. Apart from the practical difficulties of remembering ten ancestors referred to earlier, a variation of the dasapeya (BSS 12.18) provided for an alternative. Here, the sūta and grāmṇī, who, as noted earlier, may have been vaiśyas, as well as the kṣattr and saṁgrahitr, challenged the brāhmaṇas to name their matrilineal ancestors for ten generations, denying entrance to the sacred area to those who were unable to do so. An escape route was, however, provided for those who were ignorant of their genealogies--they could either declare that a vaiśya (a woman of the viś category) was their mother, or acknowledge Sāvitrī (probably the sacred chant) as their mother. The challenge to the patrilineal genealogy is remarkable in view of the fact that participating effectively in large-scale sacrifices was especially difficult for commoners, as noted earlier (Chapter II). The existence of such challenges, with the attempt to counter or contain them, suggests that the development of a patrilineal definition of rājya ran counter to the earlier associations of the institution, and was probably resisted. It also points to the existence of alternative kinship systems, in which genealogical reckoning was not necessarily patrilineal.

It is likely that the need to counter such challenges led to alternative developments. These attempted to connect the rājā with the male householders at one level, eliminating, in the process, the need to ensure the support of the entire community, by focusing on that of individual, powerful men instead. For instance, rituals prescribed for the male householder were used to establish equations between him and the divine and human rājās. Such associations were developed in the context of the agnyādheya or the setting up of the sacrificial fire, which marked the beginning of the ritual career of the householder. This was described as the means whereby Varuṇa attained rājya (SB 2.2.3.1). The identity between the rājā and the yajamāna was reiterated in the daily agnihotra (e.g., ApSS 6.14.7). Here the abhiṣeka of the sacrificer was equated with that of Indra by the devas, this in turn being described as the means whereby Indra attained rājya. Elsewhere (SB 11.2.5.5), the agnihotra and the fortnightly darśapūrṇamāsa were equated with the aśvamedha.

Such associations were developed during the saṁskāras as well, with the razor used to cut the boy's hair for the first time being equated with that used for the divine rājās Varuṇa and Soma (AGS 1.17.10, PGS 2.1.11). While it is unlikely that the performance of the domestic ritual was envisaged as leading to an actual transformation in the status of the yajamāna, it definitely underscored the common bond between him and the rājā. By creating a sense of identity between them, these rituals were probably useful in legitimating the concentration of power. This was now possible at two distinct levels--one, the overarching level associated with the rājā, and the second, the domestic level, where the yajamāna or gṛhapati could now aspire to assert his dominance over the activities associated with

the household. The fusion of these two levels was reflected in the use of the term prajā for the dependents or offspring of both the rājā and the householder.

That this attempt to defuse the challenge to the newly emerging hierarchical order was fairly successful is indicated by the gradual decline in the importance of some of the issues we have focused on. For instance, the yajamāna-bhrātṛvya/sapatna struggle is rarely referred to in the post-Vedic brahmanical tradition. This would suggest that it was probably resolved with the emergence of a more hierarchically ordered kinship structure. Similarly, while the importance of the father-son bond in particular or patrilineal genealogies in general continued to be reiterated, there are few references to explicit attempts to overthrow or challenge these norms. Thus, the human rājā in the later Vedic period succeeded in consolidating his support base by identifying himself more closely with a differentiated kinship structure and by consequently subordinating the Vāruṇic or Somic elements of rājya to values associated with Indra and Prajāpati. At the same time, the emphasis on a common householding pattern enabled the rājā to establish bonds of identity with men even apart from the connections envisaged in the context of varṇa. Thus, the role of the rājā was once again universalised, but on a basis very different from the ties which had originally bound the rājā to the viś.

Underlying and related to the attempt to win support by associating the rājā with a hierarchically ordered kinship structure was an attempt to regulate relations between the sexes in a more stratified manner. This, once again, marked a departure from the attributes associated with the early Vedic rājā, as reflected in the conceptualisation of Varuṇa and Soma.

Certain elements of the myths regarding deities are significant in this context. While both deities were identified as masculine and assigned a role in procreation, we had noted that Varuṇa was conceived of as less masculine than most of the other gods. Besides, he was identified in relation to Aditi and thus lacked patrilineal connections. Although Soma was conceived of as more masculine[69] and was occasionally located within the patrilineal framework (Section VI), neither of the deities was associated explicitly or implicitly with the battle of the sexes, presenting a contrast to Indra and Prajāpati in this respect. We have seen how the mythological associations relating to other issues were worked around or modified, or even tacitly abandoned in order to make the deities conform to the changing social requirements during the later Vedic period. Somewhat similar transformations are discernible in the mythology relating to gender. At the same time, as in other instances, rituals legitimating rājya often provided occasions for reinforcing gender stratification as well.

If the gender associations (or lack of them) of Varuṇa and Soma are any indication, the early Vedic rājā was conceived of as

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[69] As noted earlier, he was often identified as an "all-potent fluid" (Dange 1968:223) having sexual connotations and being often specifically equated with semen (SB 3.8.5.2).

functioning in a relatively less stratified context. By contrast, in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently, the rājā was not only conceived of as operating within a situation of gender stratification, but was regarded as responsible for its establishment and/or maintenance. As we have argued earlier, it is likely that this was an attempt to widen and shift the support base of the rājā. In this specific context, it meant that the rājā was no longer envisaged as functioning with the support of both men and women, but attempted to acquire the support of one against the other. In the process, the model provided by Varuṇa and Soma was marginalised.

As important as the treatment of Varuṇa and Soma was that of the goddesses in the early and later Vedic tradition. In the Ṛg Veda, goddesses were occasionally conceived of as associated with the rāṣṭra. These included Vāc (RV 10.125.3) who was envisaged as describing herself as a rāṣṭrī[70] of the devas (ibid.:8.100.10). The characteristics attributed to Vāc in this context are universalistic both in terms of the nature of power and in terms of the categories over whom this was exercised. She claimed to be able to wander with the principal deities such as the Rudras, Vasus, Ādityas, and Viśvedevas, while supporting Soma, Tvaṣṭṛ, and Pūṣan. At the same time, she was conceived of as exerting an all-pervasive influence extending beyond earth and heaven on the one hand and enabling people to eat, see, and breathe through her powers on the other. Elsewhere (SSS 15.11.1), Vāc was conceived of as obtaining svārājya, śraiṣṭhya and ādhipatya over all bhūtas or beings owing to her ability to control speech.

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[70] The contrast between those gods and goddesses who were praised and those who were conceived of as praising themselves has been noted earlier (Chapter II).

Occasionally, other less important rājñīs such as the serpent goddess[71] were also characterised in terms of universal benevolence. She was associated with the creation of plants and birds (AB 5.24.4) and was identified with the earth (PVB 4.9.6), with her worship being regarded as a means of obtaining support and all desires (ibid.). It is obvious that her attributes as well as some of those of Vāc, were somewhat similar to those of the virāj and as such would have been considered disruptive in a situation of growing social stratification. Hence, it is not surprising that her worship was marginalised, it being declared (SB 2.1.4.29-30) that her specific worship was unnecessary, as the very establishment of the sacrificial fire on the earth was a means of appropriating all that she could confer.

At another level, we find references to goddesses such as Aditi, who, while not rājñīs themselves, were bound through harmonious ties with rājās. For instance, Aditi was described as the mother of rājās (RV 2.27.7), with Varuṇa as her son, who upheld ṛta, while Uṣas, whose characteristics have been referred to earlier (Chapter II) was almost as closely associated with Varuṇa, being regarded as his jāmi or sister (ibid.:1.123.5).[72]

The myths referred to above suggest that, in a situation where rājya was exercised over a relatively undifferentiated society, men as well as women were conceived of as wielders of the benevolent influence associated with the notion.[73] Nevertheless, there are no

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[71] The sarpa rājñī is not referred to in the early Vedic tradition and may have been incorporated from a different source.

[72] The connotations of jāmitva in particular and ties between brothers and sisters in general will be explored in greater detail in Chapter VIII.

[73] This was somewhat similar to the attributes associated with the virāj, referred to earlier (Chapter III).

references (either general or specific) to human rājñīs in either the early or the later Vedic traditions, suggesting that women who aspired to such positions probably found it more difficult to attain recognition or legitimacy.

At another level, efforts were made to domesticate this possibility. This is evident from the marriage hymn (RV 10.85.46), where a prayer was offered to ensure that the bride would be a sāmrājñī amongst her father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and brother-in-law. As noted in the context of vairājya, such domestication meant, in reality, the curtailment of the legitimate sphere of influence of the woman, which was now defined in terms of the household rather than in terms of the entire universe as in the case of Vāc referred to above.

The tendency to both deny women access to the exercise of rājya and to use the mechanisms developed to legitimate rājya to enforce gender stratification were more systematically developed in the later Vedic context. We have seen that while the participation of some kinsmen, central to the patrilineage, was recognised as useful or desirable on such occasions, others were marginalised or even conceived of as inimical to the ritual and/or its performer. In a somewhat similar fashion, kinswomen whose presence was required for the ritual were implicitly selected: in fact, the only kinswoman who qualified for participation were the wives of the rājā.

The most important of the wives was the mahiṣī. The name itself is significant--she was literally the equivalent of a she-buffalo, and was not a rājñī. In other words, she was not regarded as the female counterpart of the rājā. While the mahiṣī was occasionally identified with Vāc (SB 6.5.3.4), this was probably

reflective of the process whereby new situations/relationships were described in terms of existing categories of understanding. As is more than obvious, the mahiṣī, unlike Vāc, was conceived of as exercising her influence in relation to the rājā and had virtually no imdependent claim to importance.[74]

The mahiṣī figured amongst the eight vīras whose presence was required for the rājā's abhiṣeka during the rāj ekāha (PVB 19.1.4). Besides, the mahiṣī, along with the vāvātā or favourite wife, the parivṛktī or abandoned wife, and the pālagalī or low status wife, were included amongst the ratnins or jewels whose support was sought and ensured through the ratnīnāmhavīṁśi of the rājasūya (e.g., BSS 12.5). The same categories of women also participated in the aśvamedha (e.g., ASS 10.8.9,12, SB 13.4.1.8, SSS 16.3.33, 16.4.3,4, ApSS 20.15.7), where, as we have seen (Chapter IV), this was explicitly viewed as a means of ensuring the fecundity of the realm and the prosperity of the rājā.[75] Moreover, just as the sons of important personnel were incorporated within the ritual, so also the wives of rājaputras, ugras, sūtas, and grāmaṇīs were expected to participate in the aśvamedha (BSS 15.1, ApSS 20.15.8).[76]

The significance of the participation of the wives in the ritual was probably two-fold. It is likely that the recognition of

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[74] O'Flaherty (1980:164) regarde the mahiṣī as a representative of the more benevolent aspects of female sexuality typified by the image of the cow, as opposed to what she describes as the mare-like, potentially untrammelled and hence (from a patriarchal point of view) dangerous aspects of female sexuality.

[75] In the vājapeya (SB 5.2.1.8) the wife was regarded as representing the lower half (jaghanārdha) of the sacrifice.

[76] Occasionally, wives could be replaced by daughters (e.g., SB 13.5.2.5 where the daughters of the sūta, grāmaṇī, kṣattṛ, and saṁgrahitṛ were expected to play the role assigned to the wives elsewhere).

the importance of their connection with the rājā may have conferred a certain status on them, as opposed to other kinswomen (and kinsmen apart from those connected patrilineally). At the same time, the way their participation was structured in terms of instrumentality meant that the notion that the rājā and his wives belonged to two qualitatively different social categories was made explicit.

At another level, the rituals which legitimated rājya were also used as occasions for reiterating what was envisaged as the proper relationship between the sexes. For instance, in the aśva-medha (SB 13.2.2.4), the ewe to be sacrificed to Sarasvatī was placed beneath the horse to ensure that women followed men and were obedient to them.[77] Similarly, in the rāstrabhṛt offerings (ibid.: 9.4.1.6-12), literally meant to support the rāṣṭra, offerings were made to a single male god and numerous females to ensure that one man could have several wives and be endowed with vīrya.[78]

Occasionally, moreover, the importance of goddesses was denied in such rituals. For instance, while the last sacrificial victim for the vājapeya was supposed to be meant for Vāc (SB 5.1.3.11), this was transferred to Prajāpati and justified in terms of his omnipotence. Given Vāc's association with similar attributes, referred to earlier, this shift was, in a sense, arbitrary, although

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[77] Striḥ eva tat anugāḥ kurute, tasmāt striyāḥ puṁsaḥ anuvartmanāḥ bhāvukāḥ.

[78] The pairs included Agni and the oṣadhis or plants, Sūrya and the marīcis or rays, Candramas and the nakṣatras or asterisms, Vāta and āpaḥ or the waters, yajña and dakṣiṇās, Manas and ṛk-sāman i.e., the Vedic verses and chants (SB 9.4.1.7-12).

it was logical from the standpoint of enforcing the gender hierarchy.[79] Thus, the rituals which legitimated rājya were used to reinforce gender stratification through a variety of means. What is also significant is that while efforts were made to both conciliate and dominate categories such as the viś and the brāhmaṇas, such possibilities were not envisaged for women.[80] However, unlike the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna, the resolution envisaged for gender-based conflicts was not in terms of extermination or destruction. This was probably due to the fact that while the hostility of some kinsmen could be countered by ensuring the support of others, women as a category were (and are) virtually irreplaceable.

We had suggested earlier that attempts to conciliate social categories by according them a place within the ritual and/or by using the ritual to establish bonds between them and the rājā, implied a recognition of the strength and importance of such categories for the latter. While the relative paucity of such references vis-a-vis women may indicate that rājya developed within a context of pre-existing gender stratification in which women were already denied a position of strength, the very need to reiterate such an understanding through rituals points to a certain amount of tension in this sphere. This is reflected in the notion of the hostility of goddesses to those who performed the rājasūya (SB 5.4.3.20) and the vājapeya (ibid.:5.2.1.18). In both instances, the goddess identified with the earth or Aditi (e.g., SB 5.4.3.20, BSS 12.12)

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[79] Besides, as noted in the context of the soma sacrifice (Chapter II), the emphasis on the dīkṣā in all these rituals negated the importance of the physical process of birth and women's role in it.

[80] This was virtually identical with the position of women vis-a-vis śraiṣṭhya and the soma sacrifice which legitimated it (Chapter II).

and the yajamāna or rājā were conceived of as mutually afraid of one another, with each suspecting that the other would injure him/her. Ultimately, a mother-son relationship was established between the two to ensure that they did not hurt one another.[81] In other instances, the rāṣṭra in general was conceived of as being based on the appropriation of the powers associated with women. This connection was evident in the myth of Śrī and the mitravindeṣṭi, referred to earlier (Chapter II).

This relationship of hostility between goddesses and the rājā clearly reflects a new development. As we have seen, the relationship between goddesses and the rājā was envisaged as harmonious in the early Vedic tradition. However, in the later Vedic tradition, not only were goddesses no longer or very rarely referred to as rājñīs, but they were occasionally envisaged as hostile to their divine counterparts. This is evident in the myth of the rivalry between Aditi and Varuṇa (SB 6.5.2.13), where rājya was explicitly accorded to the former rather than to the latter. This clearly ran counter to their conceptualisation in the early Vedic tradition.[82]

What is also noteworthy is the equation established between Aditi and the mahiṣī on the one hand (SB 5.3.1.4) and the earth and the mahiṣī on the other (ibid.:6.5.3.1). While this connection was not explicitly elaborated, it was probably implicit in the tension envisaged between Aditi or the earth and the yajamāna, referred to above, which was ritually resolved.

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[81] Nirṛti was likewise propitiated in the context of the rājasūya (SB 5.2.3.3) to ensure that she did not seize the sacrificer. It is interesting that the principal opponent to Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya in the Mahābhārata was thought to be Jarāsaṁdha, named after his foster-mother Jarā, who was conceived of as a rākṣasī (MBH 2.17.6). Jarāsaṁdha's hostility towards rājās as a class was viewed as particularly threatening.

[82] The fact that this possibility of rivalry was not developed further suggests that it was perceived as incongruous.

While such myths were probably symbolic of a certain amount of resistance to enforcing gender stratification through rituals, this met with only limited success. In fact, women who aspired to rājya or who attempted to question the new basis of rājya were denied legitimacy within the new ritual framework. While a similar relationship had been observed in the context of the soma sacrifice (Chapter II), the extension of these norms to the new, large-scale rituals meant that the gulf between the sexes was envisaged as both wider and virtually unbridgeable.

This relationship was reinforced in the non-sacrificial context as well, where rājās were often associated with possessing, giving and receiving women. For instance, Indra, as rājā, was conceived of as associated with numerous janis or women (RV 7.18.2), while Soma was described as the first husband of all women (e.g., PGS 1.4.16) and received Prajāpati's daughter Sāvitrī in marriage (AB 4.17.1), this constituting one of the ideal types of marriage, as noted earlier. Similarly, the acts of human rājās which were considered worthy of note included the giving of daughters--by rājā Śaryāta to the sage Cyavana (SB 4.1.5.7) and by the rājā Jāṅaśruti Pautrāyaṇa to Raikva (CU 4.2.5).[83] Ultimately, this was universalised in the ideal of all women being regarded as objects, being dehumanised in the process.[84]

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[83]While the generosity of the rājās may have been recorded because the beneficiaries were brāhmaṇas, it is also likely that this was done because the gifts were regarded as particularly meritorious and deserving of emulation. A more or less similar understanding is evident in the story of the brahmajāyā or the wife of the brāhmaṇa (RV 10.109) whose abduction led to confusion within the rāṣṭra and whose ultimate restoration by the divine rājās led to the restoration of order in the realm as well.

[84]The development of this possibility is explored further in Chapter VIII.

Thus, the establishment of rājya as an institution was associated with the systematic enforcement of gender stratification at a number of levels. For instance, early mythical possibilities, which either envisaged divine rājās exercising rājya in a situation of relatively unstratified relations between the sexes or the possibility of rājñīs, were either modified or abandoned. At the same time, rituals which legitimated rājya were envisaged as a means of both using women, especially wives, and of establishing the control of men over women in general. While this process differentiated between the rājā and women as subject and object or doer and instrument, it also enabled the rājā to establish an identity of interests with men who were asserting unilateral control over the household. This permitted the consolidation of the power and authority of the rājā on a basis which was substantially different from what was envisaged for his divine counterparts.

The social role of the rājā was thus changing during the period under consideration. We have seen, for instance, how the notion of kṣatra, typical of Varuṇa, with its connotations of universalistic power, was defined now as power vis-a-vis social, especially varṇa-defined categories. Specifically, the human rājā was conceived of as exercising this power in relation to brāhmaṇas and vaiśyas on the one hand, and in relation to the entire differentiated social order on the other.

In other instances, likewise, there was a shift from the values associated with the divine rājās--with the human rājā being assigned a role in upholding and enforcing specific elements of the kinship structure, supporting an order which was clearly hierarchical, distinguishing between generations of male kinsmen, binding them to one another, and, at the same time, denying the importance of intra-generational ties, which were potentially more egalitarian.

The relationship of the rājā to gender stratification was also more or less similar. Here, as we have seen, the possibility of rājñīs was left unexplored, and the rājā was identified with the male head of the household through a range of rituals. In other words, the human rājā was increasingly associated with maintaining a complex, stratified social order, aligning, despite tensions and stresses, with categories which were emerging as dominant. At the same time, the very support which was provided by the rājā would have permitted such social categories to acquire greater strength.

We had suggested that the changing role of the rājā vis-a-vis social issues was epitomised in the shift from the ideal of ṛta to that of dharma. The former was typically associated with the divine

rājā Varuṇa (Choudhuri 1981:33) and was occasionally extended to Soma as well (Chapter IV).[85] The all-encompassing, universalistic nature of ṛta (literally truth) has been frequently remarked upon (e.g., Griswold 1971:133). The holistic notion of ṛta included the physical, moral, and social order, which were ideally conceived of as integral parts of a whole.[86] For our present purpose, the notion of the social order associated with ṛta is especially significant, as upholding ṛta, Varuṇa's characteristic function (e.g., RV 5.63.1), did not mean enforcing a differential social code. On the other hand, ṛta had an identical meaning for all, irrespective of social distinctions.

The universality of ṛta becomes evident when one considers what were regarded as its violations. These included killing (RV 1.41.8), cursing (ibid.), decpetion (ibid.:2.29.5), and anger (ibid.: 7.86.6). What is remarkable is that there is no notion of the significance of the offence varying according to the social category to which the offender belonged--ṛta was thought to be violated if such acts were committed against any one, including brothers, friends, or neighbours (ibid.:5.85.7). In this sense, ṛta presents a sharp contrast to the discussion on dharma in the Dharma Sūtras, where the focus shifts from the offence to the social status of the offender and the victim.

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[85] Other divine rājās such as Mitra (RV 5.63.1) and the Ādityas in general (ibid.:2.27.4) were also associated with upholding ṛta. Ṛta, unlike dharma, was occasionally associated with goddesses as well, with Uṣas and Naktā (Dawn and Night respectively) being described as ṛtasya mātā, i.e., the mothers of ṛta (ibid.:1.142.7).

[86] Aguilar (1976:25) on the other hand, defines ṛta as that which sets in motion.

The nature of ṛta in practice is probably exemplified by the myth of the tānunaptra (AB 1.4.7), which explores the means of resolving disputes. According to the myth, the devas felt that the asuras were prospering on account of the disagreements amongst the former. The devas held separate discussions in groups and ultimately agreed to deposit their bodies with Varuṇa rājā with the understanding that whoever created further dissension would not be reunited with his body. The myth thus explores the possibility of arriving at an agreement through discussions amongst equals. Violation of the agreement, moreover, led to a uniform punishment, with the rājā being required to ensure the implementation of a contract that had been arrived at independently.

Upholding ṛta, which was thus potentially egalitarian and universal, was not, however, incorporated within the social role envisaged for the human rājā during the period under consideration. This is evident from the fact that the importance of maintaining ṛta is rarely reiterated on either the ritual or the prescriptive level, being replaced, more often than not, by the notion of dharma, which extended the rājā's authority over the "whole field of life" (Anjaria 1935:234).[87]

The replacement of ṛta by dharma did not simply mean the substitution of one universalistic ideal by another, because dharma,

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[87] Griswold (1971:133) observes that: "With the passing of Varuṇa in the post-Vedic period, the content of ṛita was taken up into that of dharman 'law' and karman 'retribution'...This change was not for the better. Ṛita as embodied in the will of Varuṇa was connected with a god of grace, who could pardon sin and restore the sinner to his fellowship. Karma on the contrary was a merely mechanical invoking of the principle of retribution." It should be noted also that occasionally, lip-service continued to be paid to the vāruṇic ideal of kingship, as is evident from the reference to the rājā as dhṛtavrata, a typical epithet of Varuṇa, in the relatively late GDS (8.1).

unlike ṛta, was increasingly defined in terms of varṇa and āśrama, with the rājā being expected to ensure that the "order" on which these classifications were based was protected (e.g., GDS 11.9, VDS 19.7).[88] This meant the protection of specific elements of the social order, as noted earlier, including access to rituals and the realm of the sacred, productive resources, and women.

The replacement of ṛta by dharma had important social implications. It meant that the rājā was no longer conceived of or required to follow an identical policy towards all those with whom he was connected. To an extent, this was inevitable, given the widening of the sphere of influence of the rājā--as more and different people were brought within the scope of rājya, it was difficult to adopt a universal policy towards all. As a result, the problem of securing social support and acceptance became more acute--this could be, and was resolved by exploring a number of alternative possibilities, which broadly led to a shift away from a more or less egalitarian support base to one where the support base was more differentiated, with a distinct relationship and/or identity with different social categories being gradually worked out.[89]

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[88] Occasional attempts were made to associate Varuṇa with the new social norms, as for instance in the varuṇapraghāsa. Here, the sacrificer's wife was asked if she had any lovers (e.g., SB 2.5.2.20, BSS 5.7, ApSS 8.6.20). If she had any and did not declare this, it was thought that her jñāti or kinsfolk would be harmed, whereas if she confessed, Varuṇa was expected to seize her lover. Similar questions were not envisaged for the husband.

[89] The nexus of power and authority which emerged is reflected in the stereotyped list of those who were eligible to receive the madhuparka, a mixture of curd, ghee, and honey. These included the sacrificial priest, teacher, rājā, and kinsmen belonging to different generations (e.g., AGS 1.24.2-4, GDS 5.28, BDS 2.3.6.36, VDS 11.2). The ingredients of madhuparka also figure amongst those recommended as the first food to be offered by the father to the new-born son (BAU 6.4.24). These ingredients were thought to have "the property of building pure, unspoiled semen" (Carstairs, cited in O'Flaherty 1980:52).

Devising alternative patterns of relationship alone was, however, not enough. To be effective, the means of enforcing such patterns was as important. While some of these means such as rituals have been referred to in the course of the preceding discussion, we will focus on their development in greater detail in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE RĀJĀ (III): CHANGING STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

> He whose rājya is accepted by rājās becomes a rāja.
>
> Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

I

The rājā, as is evident from the preceding discussion, was gradually acquiring a number of social and economic roles during the period under discussion. While some of these were related to the expansion of the realm or sphere of influence of the rājā, others were implicit in the channelling of and control over networks of exchange. In other cases, the rājā attempted to consolidate social support by ordering his relations with existing or emerging social categories on a new basis. All of these developments necessitated the creation of mechanisms for the fulfilment of functions which were both new and different from those associated with the rājā during the early Vedic phase. While some of these mechanisms have been touched on earlier, we will explore their development more fully in the present chapter.

The support mechanisms which were crucial included those which permitted access to economic resources, which provided the basis for developing other institutions for consolidating the power and authority of the rājā. At the same time, the very appropriation of resources presupposed the existence or creation of the means to appropriate them. We will attempt to trace these inter-related developments and assess their significance.

A second basis of support, which we will explore, centred around access to and control over instruments of coercion, typified by the horse-drawn chariot in particular. While the development of coercive mechanisms was occasionally justified in terms of protection of the people (presumably against external enemies), these mechanisms were also useful for the appropriation of resources and for dealing with internal opposition as well.

At another level, internal opposition was countered through the development of the notion of daṇḍa, literally the staff or the stick, through the use of which those who did not or could not control themselves, i.e., those who did not conform to norms, were supposed to be controlled (GDS 11.30). Although daṇḍa implied an ability to coerce others into submission, its theoretical basis was not force, but the asserted moral authority of the rājā. While a full-fledged judicial system did not develop during the period under consideration, the administration of daṇḍa, we will argue, was particularly useful in cementing the bond between the rājā and the social categories whose support was considered valuable, as daṇḍa could be used to safeguard the interests of the latter.

This will be followed by an examination of the means of communication developed by the rājā. These were important—not only for the transmission of explicit orders or commands, but also for communicating less direct, but none the less important, basic messages regarding the invulnerability or indispensability of the rājā, for instance.

Related to this, we will focus on the means of legitimation which evolved in the context of rājya. Some of these, including large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya, have been referred to

earlier. Here we will explore in detail how such rituals and other means served to differentiate the rājā from the rest of the population, and, at the same time, connected him with them.

As is obvious, the institutions whose development we will trace, did not emerge in a vacuum. We would suggest that the context within which they emerged contributed substantially to their distinctive features. To delineate the significant elements of this context briefly--the relative weakness of similar institutional developments centring around the śrestha, adhipati or svarāj points to the problems inherent in evolving such institutions. As Kurtz (1981:181) observes in a more general context:

> The early state is an amalgam of structural oppositions. On the one hand exists the state, its functionaries, bureaucratic apparatus, central authority, and embryonic economic, religious, military, legal, educational, and other support structures. On the other hand there is a subordinate population that is embedded in traditional structures and adheres to traditional values.

In other words, as will be evident from a discussion of specific institutions, the support structures which emerged were very often formally similar to earlier ones, although the content was often substantially different. This attempt to straddle both worlds, as it were, led to stresses and strains. It is also likely that the effort to meet the challenge posed by the situation contributed to the dynamic development of some of the institutions under consideration.

The second contextual dimension, which we will explore in greater detail subsequently,[1] was related to the sharpening of social differences within the realm of the rājā, which was itself a potentially expanding unit, as mentioned earlier. As we have seen

[1] See Chapters VII and VIII for details.

(Chapter V), the rājā attempted to win the support of some social categories (which were relatively more powerful) to the exclusion of others. In terms of the development of institutional support for rājya, this meant that such institutions were often multi-functional. In other words, while they were directly connected with safeguarding the interests of the rājā, they were, at the same time, viewed as a means of ensuring contact with, and the support of, the dominant social categories.[2] In practice, such multi-functionality may not have been very easy to achieve, as the interests of the rājā and the dominant social categories need not have coincided very neatly in every instance. This, once again, contributed to the exploration of a range of possibilities. Such explorations were also related to the fact that the rājā was dependent on the active support and participation of at least some members of these social categories for the very functioning of these institutions.

As in previous instances, the evidence available for an analysis of the structures of support is in itself significant. Myths pertaining to the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, contain little or no information regarding such mechanisms. This is not surprising, given the sharp divergence between the roles envisaged for the deities on the one hand and for their human counterparts in the later Vedic phase and subsequently on the other. What is also significant is that some of the support mechanisms associated with these deities were, at the same time, tacitly dismantled.

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[2]These institutions were also multi-functional at another level, in the sense that the same mechanims or structure or personnel were often employed in a range of functions, including appropriation, coercion, and communication. Such a lack of specialisation is fairly typical of chiefdoms, where "officials" tend to exercise generalised rather than specialised power (Gluckman 1971:146).

If myths provide us with negative evidence, rituals, on the other hand, provide us with a wealth of data on the emergence of alternative structures of support. In fact, as noted earlier, rituals, at a variety of levels, constituted an important means of communicating political messages and legitimating the power and authority of the rājā. Besides, the information regarding the participants in such rituals, and the roles assigned to them, are useful. This is particularly true of the ratnins (e.g., SB 5.3.1.1-13) whose participation and support was essential during the rājasūya, and the vīras who were associated with the rājā in the course of the rāj ekāha (PVB 19.1.4). Finally, incidental references enable us to corroborate, substantiate, and elaborate on the data available from rituals, myths, and prescriptions.

The importance of access to and control over material resources as a prerequisite for the development and maintenance of institutions of administration, coercion, and legitimation is widely recognised. While the appropriation of resources by the rājā in the sacrificial context has been referred to earlier (Chapter IV), here we will explore the occasions and forms of appropriation as well as the mechanisms developed for the purpose in greater detail.

To start with, the very notion of the rājā as an explicit appropriator of resources, and the centrality assigned to this in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently, marks a fundamental shift in the characterisation of the rājā. As we have seen (Chapter IV), the typical divine rājās were not conceived of as appropriating resources.[3] If this reflected the early Vedic situation, as suggested earlier, then the contrast with later developments is marked.

The later Vedic phase witnessed the development of major rituals for legitimating rājya, as noted earlier. These were characterised by two apparently contradictory goals. On the one hand, these were viewed as a means whereby the rājā could ensure general well-being.[4] At the same time, these sacrifices provided the rājā, as an unique individual, with an occasion for legitimately acquiring produce and productive resources.

The first goal, which suggested that the rājā was an embodiment of benevolence, was probably valuable for two reasons. This

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[3] In fact, the conceptualisation of the slaughter of Soma rājā, probably to serve as food for his fellow devas (SB 11.1.2.1), points to a notion diametrically opposed to appropriation.

[4] The notion of the benevolent rājā persisted throughout the brahmanical tradition. Thus, in an ideal realm, nobody was expected to die of hunger, illness, cold or heat, either intentionally or unintentionally (ADS 2.10.25.11).

reiterated the connection and the identity of the rājā with his divine counterparts who (especially Soma) were associated with notions of universal prosperity. Besides, and related to the above, it was useful in justifying claims to resources. In other words, the rājā could claim that the tangible control over specific resources or produce was necessary to enable him to fulfil his role as promoter of general well-being, as suggested earlier (Chapter IV).[5]

The emphasis on acquiring wealth had a number of implications. It necessitated specifying the kinds of resources which could be acquired, the occasions for appropriation, the people from whom resources could be obtained, and required the development of appropriate mechanisms for both actually transferring resources from various socio-economic categories to the rājā and for justifying the claims of the rājā to such resources.

The terms used to signify the appropriation or transfer of resources or produce are, in themselves, significant. These include bali, which was amongst the earliest of such terms, ātithya or hospitality, and the bhāga or share. The first term, as noted earlier (Chapter II), had a religious connotation, suggesting a propitiatory offering to a god or a powerful man. We had also seen that the offering of bali was regarded as a means of placing the recipient under an implicit obligation to protect or support the donor.[6]

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[5]The justification of appropriation in terms of benevolence "entails mutual obligations between rulers and citizens, and this reciprocity is a subtle aspect of the socialisation process by which the allegiance of the citizen is shifted to the state" (Kurtz 1981: 193).

[6]As Gunawardana (1981:138) observes: "Later on these oblations (i.e., bali) may have become regular and obligatory, but it is important that they represented a personal relationship between the ruler and the ruled."

While bali, thus defined, was evidently a more or less voluntary gift, there are indications that its significance was gradually changing. This is evident from the statement (SB 1.3.2.15) that the vaiśya offers bali as he is under the vaśa or control of the kṣatriya and has to give up whatever he has stored when asked to do so. The ability to demand and receive bali, moreover, was explicitly correlated with the vīrya or valour of the kṣatriya. The definition of bali underlying this understanding suggests an involuntary offering made under threat of coercion.[7] Thus, although the term was retained, its semantic content was substantially altered. At the same time, the use of a familiar term probably disguised the nature of the transformation and permitted the giving and receiving of bali in a transitional situation.

While the components of bali are rarely explicitly discussed, it is likely that these included agricultural produce or stocks of cattle (Ghoshal 1972:14).[8] This is suggested by the fact that those who were expected to offer bali were the viś or the vaiśya (SB 1.3.2.15, ApSS 16.32.4), i.e., the primary producers, who, if coaxed or coerced, could yield a share of their produce. However, the proportion of bali to the total produce is nowhere specified, and it is possible that the amount exacted varied according to the relative strength or weakness of those involved in the transaction, as suggested earlier (Chapter II).

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[7] This is also apparent from the analogy equating the rājā and the prajā with the eater and food respectively, referred to earlier (Chapters IV and V).

[8] It is likely that such produce was converted into more valuable prestige goods such as gold objects, including niṣkas. There is, however, no direct evidence regarding the processes involved in the transformation of access to some resources into the acquisition of others.

The occasions on which bali was demanded, given, and received are indicated in an elaborate simile (ApSS 16.32.4) which suggests that the viś offered bali to the rājā during rituals which marked the latter's rebirth. These included sacrifices such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya, which provided the context for a variety of material exchanges, as noted earlier (Chapter IV).[9]

The intrinsic link between bali and the ritual context legitimised the exactions which characterised it. At the same time it is indicative of certain problems inherent in the giving and receiving of bali. While ritual occasions could be used to justify exactions, the very context may have made it difficult for the rājā to press his claims beyond a point, as any excessive demand would have been perceived not only as oppressive, but also as violating established sacred norms or conventions.

At another level, there were limits to utilising the sacrificial context for the mobilisation and appropriation of resources. These stemmed from the fact that the performance of the sacrifice itself required a range of resources. After all, prestations would probably have flowed in only if the rājā could perform the ritual on a scale which was impressive enough to justify demands. Besides, as noted earlier (Chapter V), with increasing social complexity, and with a widening sphere of operation, it may have become more and more difficult for the rājā to ensure the presence and participation of the entire populace of the realm on such

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[9] Incidentally, this is corroborated by the description of Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya in the Mahābhārata where what is appropriated by his brothers is referred to as kara (e.g., MBH 2.23.24), whereas the gifts which are "voluntarily" brought by those attending the sacrifice are characterised as bali (ibid.:2.47.5 etc.).

occasions. Hence, the appropriation of resources such as bali through rituals may have become more difficult.

While claims to bali were never explicitly abandoned other means of appropriating resources were also devised. The second mechanism of appropriation referred to above, ātithya or hospitality was evidently well-known, as is suggested by references to it in analogies. Such hospitality may have included the slaughter or gift of animals (AB 1.3.4, ADS 2.4.8.7)[10] and the offering of food or drink (SB 3.3.4.31). In other words, while the resources acquired through bali may have been relatively imperishable, those acquired through ātithya were of only immediate value.

Nevertheless, the importance of ātithya was undeniable. This is evident from the repeated prescriptions regarding the offering of hospitality in general, and the prestigious madhuparka and arghya[11] in particular, to the rājā (e.g., AGS 1.24.3, PGS 1.3.1,2, ADS 2.4.6.36, BDS 2.3.6.36, GDS 5.31). It is likely that the emphasis on hospitality was related to the fact that it provided the rājā with direct access to the produce of the household, and was a means of support which could be tapped whenever required.[12] Besides, claims to such hospitality enabled the rājā to establish direct links with male householders in particular, this in turn providing an important means of legitimising the position of the rājā.

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[10] The AB (1.3.4) refers to the slaughtering of a bull for a manuṣya rājā as a common practice, whereas the ADS (2.4.8.7) suggests that a rājā endowed with dharma was entitled to a cow if a year had elapsed since his last visit.

[11] Madhuparka was an offering of honey and milk, while arghya was the water offered at the respectful reception of a guest (SED: s.v.).

[12] As we shall see below, this was often extended to include hospitality for the rājā's entourage as well.

The third form of appropriation associated with the rājā was the bhāga. As noted in the context of ādhipatya (Chapter III), the bhāga or share was viewed as payment in lieu of protection. One of the advantages of bhāga was that it could be given and received in a non-ritual context. Thus, the basis and occasions of appropriation could be widened almost infinitely.[13] As much is evident from the later GDS (10.24-35) where the rājā was conceived of as entitled to a share of virtually all important forms of produce or productive activities.[14] More commonly, bhāga was described as a sixth or ṣaḍbhāga of the produce (e.g., BDS 1.10.18.1, VDS 1.42) payable to the rājā for the protection he was expected to offer his subjects.[15]

It is evident that each of the forms of appropriation referred to above required fairly distinct support mechanisms. In the case of bali, priestly support was particularly important in order to create the ritual context which both provided an occasion for its exaction and justified it. Ātithya, on the other hand, was linked to the personal presence of the rājā (or possibly his followers) in the household and could be successfully exacted only through extensive

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[13] According to Gunawardana (1981:146): "These new exactions... represent a depersonalisation or formalisation of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled."

[14] The suggested share of agricultural produce (referred to as balidāna) ranged from one-tenth to one-sixth, that of cattle and gold was one-fiftieth, the śulka on other goods or merchandise (paṇya) was one-twentieth the value, that on roots, fruits, flowers, medicinal herbs, honey, meat, grass, and firewood was one-sixtieth, artisans were expected to work for a day every month, as were the owners of boats and carts, while vaṇiks or traders were also expected to provide one article of merchandise per month.

[15] The occasions and means whereby bhāga was collected are not, however, explicitly laid down.

travelling. Finally, the collection of bhāga implied the development of a fairly complex administrative machinery for assessing both the total produce and the share due to the rājā and appropriating a wide range of goods and services.[16]

In social terms, the development of such relationships, apart from involving a basic dependence of the rājā on producing groups, required the support of the priests on the one hand, and personnel capable of ensuring hospitality or the collection of a bhāga or share on the other.

The support of the priests was particularly valuable for justifying the development of appropriative relations in general. This was attempted, and possibly achieved, through a variety of rituals. These ranged from those in which the rājā participated directly, such as the rājasūya (SB 5.3.3.12) during which the priest was supposed to render everything (and everybody) except the brāhmaṇas into food for the rājā/yajamāna, to domestic rituals, where the participation of the rājā was at best analogical. An example of the latter is provided by the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice (ibid.: 1.3.2.15) where an offering was recommended to ensure that the prajā and the ruler or kṣatriya remained united to one another as food, ādya (literally that which deserves to be eaten) and attṛ or eater respectively.[17] The constant reiteration of the connection and its ideal content at the level of the household in the course of

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[16] While the beginnings of the latter process will be traced below, its full development falls outside our purview. That details of such machinery are not discussed within the brahmanical tradition also points to a certain secularisation in this sphere towards the very end of the period under discussion.

[17] The significance of the notion of eating has been referred to earlier (Chapters Iv and V).

regular rituals meant in effect that the message of the rājasūya was now no longer restricted to a major ritual occasion but could be potentially communicated more consistently to a larger audience. It is also likely that the particular understanding of the rājā-prajā relation which was sanctified and legitimated was used to justify not only bali, but virtually any exaction the rājā may have thought fit to impose.

As we have seen, the services of the priests were rewarded through dakṣiṇā and dāna. However, there may have been some problems regarding the exact sharing of resources. This is suggested by the constant prescriptions enjoining the rājā to be generous to brāhmaṇas (e.g., ADS 2.10.26.1) as well as by the attempts of brāhmaṇas to claim exemption from exploitation or being eaten in general (e.g., SB 5.3.3.12) and from taxation in particular (e.g., VDS 19.23).

Almost simultaneously, efforts to ensure appropriation through the support of other personnel were explored. Amongst those who provided such support were the sūta and grāmaṇī. In one instance (BAU 4.3.37) these personnel, amongst others, were described as waiting for the return of the rājā, with anna and pāna (food and drink).

The means whereby such personnel acquired the resources in question are not explicitly discussed. However, both the sūta and the grāmaṇī were associated with the chariot (e.g., SB 8.6.1.16-20), while their sons were expected to guard the sacrificial horse for the aśvamedha during its wanderings (ibid.:13.4.2.5, SSS 16.1.16). The possibility of acquiring resources by those who guarded the horse have been referred to earlier (Chapter IV) and the ability to use force to secure prestations which were probably less forthcoming

on a voluntary basis may have acquired greater importance during the period under consideration. Besides, the use of the chariot permitted the collection of tribute on a more systematic basis, as is suggested by the description of the chariot as a means of obtaining wealth in the context of the vājapeya (SB 5.1.4.3).

While access to military equipment symbolised by the chariot and weapons constituted part of the basis of the strength of the grāmaṇī, he also owed his significance to direct control over produce and productive resources, which was considered typical. For instance, the grāmaṇī, identified as a vaiśya (SB 5.3.1.6), was equated with plenitude (bhūmā, ibid.). Besides, śrī or prosperity, equated with anna and paśu, were regarded as an essential characteristic of grāmaṇya (ibid.:8.6.1.12). More commonly, the grāmaṇī was regarded as one of the typical examples of a gataśrī, a man who had attained prosperity (BSS 17.49, SSS 2.6.5).[18] In other words, while the support of the priests was important for legitimating claims to produce, the actual acquisition of resources in both the ritual and the non-ritual context probably depended on the material and military support provided by the sūta and grāmaṇī. Hence, it is not surprising that they were described as arājanaḥ rājakartṛs, non-rājās who were rājā-makers (SB 3.4.1.7).[19]

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[18] Others placed in the same category included the śuśruvat or learned brāhmaṇa and the rājaṅya. The grāmaṇī's association with prosperity is also referred to in Buddhist literature (Ghoshal 1966a: 35). According to Chakravarti (1987:85), "the gāmaṇī represented the 'political' wing of the gahapati category."

[19] Another more or less similar functionary was the ugra who was expected to provide the rājā with food and drink (e.g., BAU 4.3.37-38) and who was associated with swiftness and strength (SB 6.1.3.13).

The means whereby the sūta and grāmaṇī were rewarded is occasionally suggested. These point to the intimate ties which bound the rājā to such men, evident from the analogy between the sūta and grāmaṇī and the rājā on the one hand, and the metres and Soma on the other (SB 3.4.1.8). Here we are told that just as the sūta and grāmaṇī receive food after or along with the rājā, and not separately so also the offering to the metres should be made after or along with the offering to Soma. In other words, while the sūta and the grāmaṇī may have ensured access to hospitality (amongst other things) for the rājā, they were rewarded with a share in both the prestige and the resources which were explicitly conferred on such occasions.

At another level, the rājā probably ensured the support of such categories and consolidated his control over resources by gradually marginalising those who were associated with alternative, possibly earlier systems of distribution. These included the bhāgadugha and the akṣavāpa. While they are referred to as ratnins in the rājasūya (e.g., SB 5.3.1.9-10), their position towards the end of the list[20] indicates that they were relatively unimportant. This is also corroborated by the virtual absence of references to them in later prescriptive literature.

The bhāgadugha was in all likelihood a distributor of shares, which probably included the spoils of battle, cattle, cereals etc. (R.S.Sharma 1983a:76, 1984:11).[21] Given this possibility, the relatively low position of the bhagadugha in the list of ratnins

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[20] See Table II for details.

[21] This interpretation is also supported by Law (1960:90) who described the bhāgadugha as a "dealer out of portions or a distributor of food" and Ghoshal (1966a:35) who refers to him as a carver.

indicates the declining importance of generalised redistribution as a function associated with the rājā, a situation which is supported by the evidence on the changing definition of the rājā's relationship to economic resources, referred to earlier.[22]

Like the bhāgadugha, the akṣavāpa, in charge of dicing, was also associated with mechanisms of exchange which were being marginalised. We had suggested earlier (Chapter IV) that dicing was linked to the allocation of rights to use land (Thapar 1984:31) or wealth, and was a potentially levelling mechanism, preventing the consolidation or concentration of resources. The marginalisation and ritualisation of dicing involved, as we have seen, a distortion of its original nature. In other words, the very rituals which legitimated rājya provided for an implicit hierarchy amongst systems of exchange, reinforcing those which permitted the concentration of resources in the hand of the rājā and possibly his supporters, while virtually abandoning processes which would have permitted a more equitable distribution.[23]

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[22] The fact that lip-service continued to be paid to the bhāgadugha was probably due to the difficulties inherent in rejecting traditional practices and systems outright, as suggested earlier (Section I).

[23] Towards the very end of the period under consideration, there is evidence to suggest that the rājā was expected to intervene in and control other forms of exchange which were acquiring importance. For instance, he was expected to check weights and measures (VDS 19.15), thus providing safeguards for traders. Besides, dravyavṛddhi (literally the growth of objects or wealth) or interest was thought to stop on his death, resuming growth only after the installation of a new rājā (ibid.:2.49,50). Implicit in this prescription is an assumption that the existence of the rājā was essential for money-lending. In other words, the rājā was gradually associated with responsibility for a very different kind of exchange system.

Thus, the rājā attempted to broaden his control over productive resources. This is evident in the efforts to acquire such resources on a number of occasions, both ritual and non-ritual. At the same time, the need to acquire resources or produce necessitated the development of support structures and ties with a range of personnel, including priests and the sūta and grāmaṇī. Some of the resources acquired were shared with such personnel in the form of gifts or hospitality. Besides, their support may have been ensured through the pursuit of policies which permitted them to consolidate resources on an individual basis. In other words, the very process whereby the rājā acquired access to resources was both conditioned by and in turn influenced the contemporary socio-economic situation.

III

Access to produce or productive resources was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of rājya. As we have seen, to be effectively enforced, control over material resources depended on the ability to develop appropriative mechanisms. Here we will examine the development of instruments of physical coercion, the social categories which participated in the process, as well as the use envisaged for such institutions. As will be evident, such instruments of coercion were not only, or even primarily developed in the context of actual or supposed external threats, but were closely related to the appropriative relations referred to earlier.

Coercive power or physical force was not typical of either of the divine rājās. While both were associated with kṣatra as noted earlier (Chapter V), this did not initially include notions of coercive ability or physical prowess. Varuṇa's typical weapon, in contrast to Indra's vajra, was the noose or pāśa which would have been particularly useless on the battle-field or in situations of armed conflict.[24]

Soma was, likewise, conceived of as a relatively passive deity; he was constantly described as being brought from heaven, both in early Vedic myths (Deshmukh 1933:281)—and in the later Vedic tradition (e.g., PVB 6.9.22), his own role in the process being one of marginal importance. Another myth (AB 1.5.4) refers to Soma's dependence on Agni for protection against the asuras and rakṣas in

[24] On one occasion, however, Varuṇa and Mitra, along with other gods, were conceived of as driving away asuras and rakṣas from the soma sacrifice (AB 6.27.1). As suggested earlier, such myths probably represented a tendency to coalesce the divergent attributes of different gods and arrive at a composite whole.

the sacrificial context.[25] As we have argued earlier, the absence of an emphasis on prowess as an attribute of the divine rājās may indicate that while the early Vedic rājā could occasionally demonstrate his skills in warfare, these were not considered intrinsic to the definition of rājya.[26]

In the later Vedic context, however, the rājā was more systematically associated with notions of coercion. Besides, as noted earlier (Chapter V), this ability to coerce was legitimised through rituals which sanctified the rājā's claims to control over the productive resources of the viś, to destroy or eliminate his bhrātṛvya or sapatna and to assert the dominance of all men over women. As opposed to this, the notion of the rājā as a defender against external enemies is relatively less developed. The emphasis in the later Vedic tradition was clearly on incorporating people within the realm, and consolidating the rājā's hold over them.

Simultaneously, the notion of the valiant rājā was positively valorised. This is evident in the context of the aśvamedha where the rājaṅya lute-player was expected to extol the rājā's success in battle (yuddha and saṁgrāma) everyday throughout the period when the sacrificial horse was let loose to wander (e.g., SB 13.1.5.6). This

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[25] Occasionally, however, he was conceived of as valorous, as endowed with indriya and vīrya (AB 1.3.1) and as a leader of charioteers with weapons (Kapadia 1959:217). In another instance (SB 2.5.4.4), the devas were supposed to have killed Vṛtra under the leadership of Soma rājā.

[26] Even in the later brahmanical tradition, when warfare was regarded as one of the typical functions of the rājā, he was expected to fight according to norms. For instance, the BDS (1.10.18.11) states that the rājā ought not to attack those who were afraid, mad, intoxicated, women, children, old men, or brāhmaṇas. Such an understanding is also supported by the discussion on warfare or combat in the epics, where violation of these norms inevitably excites comments or justifications.

emphasis on perpetuating and possibly elaborating the memory of military victories meant that the rājā's claim to rājya was being asserted, partly at least, on the basis of his military prowess. What is more, this element became standardised in later definitions of rājya (e.g., GDS 10.12, BDS 1.10.18.3, VDS 2.17) where the rājā was routinely expected to ensure victory and learn the use of the chariot and the bow and arrow (GDS 10.14).

Although the rājā's victories were often depicted as individual triumphs, it is clear that these rested, more often than not, on the active support of at least some people. Here, once again, there is a fairly marked difference between the situation described in myths and that evident in rituals and prescriptions.

On the mythical plane, the Maruts, often equated with the viś, were, as we have seen (Chapter II), conceived of as agents in Indra's victory over Vṛtra (e.g., SB 2.5.3.3). Similarly, the Viśvedevas, also identified with the viś, were thought to ward off the asuras and rākṣasas who attacked the soma sacrifice (e.g., AB 6.27.1). While this suggests the active participation of the viś in such conflicts, this notion was not developed further in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently. Thus, it is likely that the viś was losing control or being deprived of its military function. This was probably related to the changing rājā-viś relationship in general, referred to earlier (Chapter V). In a situation where this relationship was becoming more exploitative, the viś were probably less reliable as allies (as is suggested for instance by the Indra-Maruts relationship referred to earlier). Besides, the very need to control the viś in order to enforce the new rājā-viś relationship meant that different systems of coercion were required. Hence, it is not

surprising that the rājā was turning to other personnel for support. This is typified by the growing importance of the senānī, literally the leader of the senā or army,[27] indicated by his inclusion amongst the ratnins or jewels during the rājasūya (SB 5.3.1.1) and his association with Agni Anīkavat (literally Agni endowed with an army) in the same context.

While the senānī was implicitly connected with the senā or army, it is his links with the chariot which are most consistently emphasised. This is evident from the names assigned to typical senānīs (SB 8.6.1.16-20). These include Rathagṛtsa (skilled in chariot (fight), Eggeling 1963d:105), Rathasvana (chariot-noise, ibid.:106), Rathaprota (fixed on the chariot, ibid.:106), Tārkṣya (a mythical being, originally identified as a horse and later taken to be a bird, SED:s.v.), and Senājit or the winner of armies (Eggeling 1963d:108). Of the five names, three were directly and one (Tārkṣya) indirectly associated with the chariot. In other words, the senānī's importance rested more on his ability to use the chariot effectively than on his control over an army. It is possible that this emphasis on the non-human means of warfare was related to the tensions inherent in the attempt to transform the nature of the viś-dominated senā into a body which would be effective not only against external enemies, but against the viś as well.

The emphasis on the charict is also evident in the case of other personnel associated with the later Vedic rājā. These included

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[27] The paucity of references to the senāpati, literally the lord or master of the senā, would suggest that the leader could not claim absolute control over the army at this stage.

the grāmaṇī[28] and the sūta[29] as noted above (Section II) and the saṁgrahitṛ,[30] who was associated with the ratha in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.1.8). All these personnel, moreover, were included in the list of ratnins (e.g., SB 5.3.1.5 ff).

It is obvious that the new group of military leaders whose support the rājā sought were important because of their association with the chariot, which evidently distinguished them from the common populace. The ability to own and maintain such a vehicle in itself implied access to productive resources over and above immediate requirements and an ability to convert such access into a mechanism of coercion. In its turn, the chariot constituted not only a symbol of power, but a means of swift transport and attack, and hence was a means of obtaining wealth, as was occasionally recognised rather explicitly (SB 5.1.4.3). Thus, those members of the viś who could acquire chariots could then use these to acquire more wealth and on a different basis (i.e., not through direct production) and thus

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[28] As in the case of the senānī, most of the ideal names of the grāmaṇī were related to the chariot. These names include (SB 8.6.1.16-20) Rathaujas or mighty in chariot (fight) (Eggeling 1963d:105), Rathecitra or glorious on the chariot (ibid.:106), Asamaratha or of matchless chariot (ibid.), Aristanemi or the felly of whose wheel is unhurt (SED:s.v.), and Suṣeṇa or the leader of a fine army (Eggeling 1963d:108).

[29] The association between the sūta and the chariot is reiterated in the epics as well, being typified by the role of Sumantra in the Rāmāyaṇa.

[30] The saṁgrahitṛ is referred to for the first time in later Vedic literature (Ghoshal 1956:307). The association between the saṁgrahitṛ and the chariot is also suggested by his connection with the Aśvins (R.S.Sharma 1983a:87). In fact, the sūta, grāmaṇī, kṣattṛ, saṁgrahitṛ, and senānī constituted a distinct group associated with the chariot (Heesterman 1957:54).

differentiate themselves from other members of the viś.[31] At the same time, they would have been able to provide the rājā with suppo on a basis which was considerably different from that of the viś as typified by homogeneous categories such as the Maruts and the Viśvedevas. Hence, it is not surprising that the rājā attempted to win them over, acknowledging their strength, and, at the same time, using them to bolster his position, ostensibly vis-a-vis external enemies, but effectively vis-a-vis his own people as well.

The use envisaged for the coercive network which was thus developing is in itself significant. Virtually all the personnel referred to above, and/or their kinsmen, were expected to guard the aśvamedha horse in the course of its wanderings (e.g., SB 13.4.2.5, SSS 16.1.16, ApSS 20.4.4). While this may have been a means of spreading sacred power and fertility throughout the realm (Gonda 1969:114) it was, at the same time, an occasion for appropriating wealth, as noted earlier (Chapter IV). At another level, the legitimacy of acquiring wealth through warfare was recognised almost throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g., RV 10.101.7, GDS 10.19). In other words, the coercive mechanism was viewed as a means of enforcing appropriative relationships in a rather direct fashion.

The means whereby the sūta and grāmaṇī were rewarded have been referred to earlier (Section II). It is likely that the saṁgrahitṛ was rewarded with a share of the spoils of the battle (AB 2.9.1).[32]

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[31] The sūta's position was somewhat different from that of the other personnel, as he owed his importance more to the fact that he drove the chariot of the rājā than to direct ownership of a chariot.

[32] In this context there is a reference to the saṁgrahitṛ being rewarded with a quarter of the wealth or vitta won by the Bhāratas in their battle against the Satvats.

Thus, while regular salaries were unknown, and the system of rewards continued, these now served to bind together a relatively smaller group of men who were united not only against other similar groups, but against the larger populace of their own realms as well.

IV

The use of force, threatened or actual, was only one of a range of means which were developed to establish or enforce the rule of the rājā. As has been frequently observed, overt coercion, which may be the ultimate weapon for upholding power, is, in practice, supplemented by other institutions, which are often adequate to maintain relationships of dominance in most situations. Hence, the day-to-day use of explicit coercion is often rare. Amongst such non-coercive institutions, those concerned with the administration of what is defined as justice are often crucial. Here we will explore the development of the notion of daṇḍa, which, we will argue, apart from symbolising a function or a role expected of the rājā, was also important in justifying or legitimating the control exerted by him. In other words, the perpetuation of the ideal of the just rājā ensured social support, and meant that recourse to force may have been less necessary in concrete situations.

The appropriation of the task of administering daṇḍa was one means whereby the rājā continued to maintain his identity and connection with the early ideal of rājya, typified by Varuṇa in particular. As noted earlier (Chapter V), Varuṇa's association with the maintenance of ṛta was especially close. He was conceived of as endowed with omniscience, being able to see both good and evil, as well as things which were near or far, and the past and the future (RV 2.27.3, 1.25.11). Besides, his spaśa or spies (ibid.:7.61.3) were expected to assist him in the task.

Varuṇa's weapon of punishment was, however, not the daṇḍa but the pāśa or noose, which characterised him almost throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g., RV 1.24.15, Gajendragadkar 1965:40).

The unique feature of the pāśa was that the impact of its use, unlike that of the daṇḍa, was reversible--it could be used to bind, but could be removed in order to release the offender as well. Hence, prayers were offered to Varuṇa to remove sins and protect the invoker (RV 2.28.9).

Related to the above perceptions, the means whereby Varuṇa was expected to punish offenders included diseases in general and dropsy in particular (Deshmukh 1933:217). This was in a sense logical, because if Varuṇa presided over a holistic order, violations, which meant creating disorder, could be punished through the creation of disorders at another, related level. In other words, social conflicts and differences could be contained through the threat of imminent disease.

However, in practice, disease may not have always struck those who were regarded as offenders. While such discrepancies may not have been particularly acute in a situation where social differences were not too sharp, and hostility or tension relatively muted, they may have become more glaring in the complex socio-political situation we have outlined earlier, and which provided the context within which the rājā was consolidating his position. Here, as we have seen, offences were no longer viewed in intrinsic terms, but were increasingly assessed in terms of the social categories to which the offender and the victim belonged. Moreover, such social categories were not equivalent. In such a situation, the weight of offences was hierarchically ordered, and the rājā, who depended on the support of the dominant social categories, necessarily tended to accept and develop a definition of justice which was considerably different from the earlier one. Besides, less was left to chance attacks of illness.

Thus, on the one hand, the human rājā's identity with Varuṇa continued to be reiterated. For instance, in the rājasūya (SB 5.4.4.5), the rājā who mounted the throne was declared to be dhṛtavrata and equal to Varuṇa rājā. The choice of the epithet emphasised stability and the maintenance of norms and customs (Gonda 1959:113). At the same time, efforts were made to both define the sphere within which the rājā was expected to operate, and the means at his disposal more closely. In both respects there was a shift from the universalistic Varuṇic possibilities.

The attempt to define the sphere of the rājā is reflected in the composition or compilation of norms in the Dharma Sūtras. While the rājā was not explicitly expected to enforce all the norms or punish each and every violation, we have seen (Chapter V) that there were some areas where he was expected to intervene. The issues focused on, as well as the resolutions envisaged, were, as noted before, related to specific elements of the varṇa and gender hierarchy. As we had suggested, the focus on such issues was a means whereby the rājā could consolidate social support. While the extent to which specific rājās intervened in such issues probably varied according to circumstances, the potential ability to enforce norms made the rājā appear as both powerful and indispensable. Secondly, it probably provided, at the same time, a mechanism for penetrating within existing or emerging social relationships, and of widening the scope of rājya.

Related to this was the question of defining dharma. Not surprisingly, a similar question was not posed vis-a-vis ṛta, which was conceived of as natural pre-existing order. As we have seen, brāhmaṇas claimed a virtual monopoly over the right to define dharma.

Besides, virtually all the Dharma Sūtras (e.g., GDS 12.52) contain detailed descriptions of the brāhmaṇa members of the rājā's pariṣad who were assigned or claimed a central role in both defining and codifying norms and in enforcing them, especially through the prescription of a range of penances, which often substituted for punishments, as noted earlier (Chapter V).

At the same time, the rājā, unlike Varuṇa (who was intrinsically qualified), was expected to possess a number of qualifications for administering daṇḍa. Typically, it was suggested that he ought to be good in words and deeds, with knowledge of both logic and other branches of learning, endowed with adequate resources, impartial towards his prajā, and he was expected to inflict lawful punishment (GDS 11.2). It should be noted that the emphasis on impartiality and nyāyadaṇḍatva (e.g., GDS 10.8) meant in practice the enforcement of a norm which varied according to varṇa, āśrama, and gender, and was only superficially impartial.

The need to administer daṇḍa was constantly reiterated. This was described as a means whereby the rājā could attain both this world and the next (ADS 2.5.11.4). Besides, the rājā who did not punish offenders was considered both guilty and polluting (ADS 2.11.28.13, GDS 18.36, VDS 19.40, BDS 1.10.19.10).[33]

At another level, the emphasis on the symbolism of daṇḍa, as opposed to the pāśa, meant that the punishment administered by the rājā acquired an irrevocable, final character. In other words, each

[33] As an extension of this, those who were killed by rājakrodha or the anger of the rājā were thought to be purified immediately, along with their kinsfolk (GDS 14.10). The implication was that the rājā, by his act of violence actually restored the social and moral order which had been disrupted by the crime or sin.

instance of the administration of punishment reinforced the definitio of power which was emerging, presenting it as unchallengeable or irreversible.[34]

Despite the emphasis on dāṇḍa, the enforcement mechanism available to the rājā was rather weak. Varuṇa's spaśa or spies are rarely heard of subsequently, and when spies are referred to in later literature, they were primarily viewed as useful for acquiring information relevant to the state, and were not explicitly concerned with reporting violations of norms for redress. Thus, the group of functionaries associated with the enforcement of ṛta were marginalise probably sharing a fate somewhat similar to that of the akṣavāpa and the bhāgadugha referred to earlier.

If the earlier mechanisms were considered less effective for enforcing the new order, the development of new ones was also not very easy. This is suggested by the constant prescription that a thief ought to run to the rājā after committing theft, confess his sin/crime and beg for pardon (e.g., ADS 1.9.25.4, GDS 12.40-41, BDS 2.1.1.15,16, VDS 19.38). This dependence for enforcing rules on the very same people who were guilty of violating them may have been rather ineffective in practice.

In such a situation, it is not surprising that punishments were frequently substituted by penances, which could be prescribed by the ācārya or purohita, the teacher and the priest respectively (ADS 2.5.10.14). Such penances were relatively simple, including

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[34] Daṇḍa may have also been symbolic of the axis uniting the divine and earthly worlds (Gonda 1965:265). Such an identification would have been useful in assigning its use a sacrosanct character.

japa or the recitation of sacred texts or names, tapas or austerity, homa or offerings, upavāsa or fasting, and dāna or the giving of gifts (GDS 19.12).

As is evident from the treatment of theft and the prescription of penances, daṇḍa was, in fact, frequently supplemented by the right to pardon sinners, which was claimed, or accorded to, the rājā, snātaka, ācārya, and ṛtvik (ADS 2.10.27.21). This was probably an important means of extending the influence of both the rājā and brāhmaṇas, who could be considered nearly Varuṇa-like in power and status. The rājā who could punish as well as pardon would be almost divine, and hence inviolable.

To summarise: while the assertion of an ability to administer daṇḍa was important in legitimising the position of the rājā and winning social support for him, the development of this mechanism of support was by no means easy. While part of the problem may have stemmed from the constraint on resources, other problems were posed by the earlier, powerful association with Varuṇa rājā, which could not be explicitly or totally ignored or bypassed. In this situation, while the rājā theoretically claimed a position somewhat similar to Varuṇa's, the policies he was expected to adopt were markedly different. Besides, he lacked the ability to carry the administration of daṇḍa to its logical conclusion. This is evident from the discrepancies between the potential and actual scope of daṇḍa, and the weak instruments of enforcement. It is also apparent in the dependence on priestly support for both defining and enforcing norms.

Nevertheless, the importance of the rudimentary judicial system which was emerging needs to be underscored. It was a means of cementing ties with the dominant social categories, as noted earlier. Besides, it permitted the consolidation and intensification of the power of the rājā by potentially granting him access to virtually every sphere of human activity. At another level, the association developed between the rājā and this sphere, typified by analogies with Varuṇa's, strengthened the rājā's claims to sacrality and thus legitimated his position.

V

The supportive mechanisms we have outlined above presupposed the development of means of communications as well. As is obvious, communication was necessary for the consolidation of the power of the rājā on at least two levels--one between the rājā and those who constituted his core support group, including the priesthood, the sūta, grāmaṇī, kṣattṛ, and saṁgrahitṛ, and a second between the rājā and the viś or prajā. In the first instance, the very development of the structures of support referred to earlier would have engendered a certain closeness between the rājā and such personnel. Moreover, the ties with them were recognised through rituals such as the ratnīnāmhavīṁśi and the aśvamedha.

The second level of communication was, in a sense, of fundamental importance. The urgency to communicate at this level was related primarily to the need to ensure a particular kinship structure in order to generate and control the resources necessary for the maintenance of the state (Gailey 1987:x). Related to this, it was also an important meant of spreading the "web of control" (Kurtz 1981:189) through asserting the importance and invulnerability of those who aspired to dominance. The necessity of communication was particularly important in this domain, as resorting to means of physical coercion was (and is) virtually impossible as a sustained policy.

Given the need to reach out to members of an increasingly differentiated social order, a range of means of communication were developed. Besides, in some cases, certain possibilities were gradually abandoned or marginalised, and were replaced by others. The personnel involved in the process of communication were also fairly varied. In other instances, efforts were made to intervene in and

divert existing means of communication to ensure that these flowed from and to the rājā and the personnel who supported him.

To start with, there was a certain emphasis on developing physical means of communication, epitomised by the chariot, which was important both for sending messages and commands and for collecting resources. Not surprisingly, categories such as the sūta and the grāmaṇī were particularly important in this respect.

The importance of the sūta in particular was recognised almost throughout the brahmanical tradition. While this may have stemmed in part from his mobility, typified by his association with the chariot, it was also related to his knowledge of the oral tradition. In fact, the sūta was probably the perpetuator of a "worldly, aristocratic, ideological, and semi-historical tradition" (Ruben 1966:320) and was a court minstrel or chronicler (Eggeling 1963c:60, Ghoshal 1966a:35). In a situation where writing or literacy may have had only limited relevance, the sūta's ability to communicate orally was evidently valuable.

The exact content of the sūta's lore is not explicitly recorded. However, given the fact that sūtas are credited with the narration of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas in later tradition, it is likely that this consisted of stories, possibly eulogistic, about rājās, and was probably couched in fairly simple language. Thus, the message communicated by the sūtas familiarised people with the exploits of the rājās, providing for a selected and controlled flow of information stressing what were regarded as desirable or ideal attributes for rulers. The message, moreover, was rendered even more effective through the use of an aesthetic presentation. In other words, the pleasure of listening to the sūta facilitated the communication of notions regarding rājya.

The social origins of the sūta are also significant. There are indications that originally the sūta was regarded as a member of the viś (BSS 18.2).[35] As such, his ability to communicate probably rested on his close links with the people. However, in the later brahmanical tradition, the social status assigned to him was low--he was regarded as the product of a pratiloma union between a brāhmaṇa woman and a kṣatriya man (GDS 4.17,18, BDS 1.9.17.8). At the same time, the sūta continued to be equated with seers on account of his knowledge of traditional lore (Gupta 1961:35). It is likely that the attempt to attribute a low status to the sūta was part of the effort of brāhmaṇas to monopolise the most important channels or forms of communication. Ultimately, a compromise was worked out providing for the incorporation of the lore of the sūta within the brahmanical tradition in the standardised versions of the epics and Purāṇas, while the transmission and preservation of the lore was increasingly taken over by the brāhmaṇas. What is noteworthy is that although control over the medium itself may have been wrested from the sūta, it continued to be used for the propagation of the norms and values associated with rājya.[36]

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[35]Here the purohita, sthapati, and sūta were regarded as representatives of the first three varṇas respectively.

[36]That there may have been differences between what was communicated by the sūta and the values which the brāhmaṇas attempted to perpetuate is suggested by the variations in the daśapeya referred to earlier (Chapter V). We had noted that the sūtas, grāmaṇīs, kṣattṛs, and saṁgrahitṛs evidently attempted to foster an alternative system of genealogical reckoning. Such differences were probably ironed out according to the brahmanical ideal as and when the traditions of the sūta were brought within the brahmanical tradition. At another level, the subject matter of the sūta's lore was substantially enlarged. For instance, the epics and Purāṇas were used to convey the new doctrines associated with Vaiṣṇavism, and, to a lesser extent, Śaivism.

While the sūta and the communication system associated with him were recognised and used extensively, other channels of communication were marginalised. These included those associated with the pālāgala, probably a courier (Eggeling 1963c:64) or messenger (R.S.Sharma 1980:55). Although the pālāgala was recognised amongst the ratnins during the rājasūya (e.g., SB 5.3.1.11), he was at the same time regarded as a śūdra, whose presence in the sacrifice had to be expiated (ibid.:5.3.2.2). The kinds of messages communicated by the pālāgala are nowhere discussed, and there are virtually no references to him in later sources. What seems likely is that the pālāgala probably communicated with one of the groups which were being absorbed within the scope of rājya. His importance was probably recognised in a transitional situation to facilitate the incorporation of such groups, but at a later stage, following the consolidation of the rājā's position, the pālāgala, never very important, as is evident from his inclusion towards the very end of the list of ratnins, was ignored completely.

The most important system of communication developed, however, was probably through the priesthood, which could operate within virtually every household of men belonging to the first three varṇas (and probably elsewhere as well). We have seen (Chapter V) how links between the purohita and the rājā had been forged, despite tensions and stresses.[37] Once developed, this provided the basis for communicating a range of important political messages at a variety of levels.

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[37] The institution of paurohitya itself may have developed during the period under consideration. This is evident from the paucity of references to the purohita in the early Vedic tradition. According to Basu (1925:34) the term occurs only twice in the relatively late tenth maṇḍala of the Ṛg Veda.

To start with, the presence of the purohita in particular and other brāhmaṇas in general was regarded as essential for the performance of rituals by the rājā. These included large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya which were important occasions for mobilising and distributing resources and for communicating messages regarding the ideal ordering of social relations within the realm.[38] Besides, the rājā/yajamāna could claim virtual identity with the gods through the performance of such rituals.[39] Such claims to divinity were clearly crucial for legitimating the position of the rājā by portraying him as both indispensable and unique vis-a-vis the rest of the population of the realm.

The aśvamedha, for instance, communicated important messages at a number of levels. The very wandering or journey of the sacrificial horse, accompanied by an entourage consisting of the sūtas, grāmaṇīs, sons of kṣattṛs and saṁgrahitṛs, and rājaputras (SB 13.4.2.5, SSS 16.1.16, ApSS 20.4.3) communicated a powerful message regarding the might of the rājā who was able to mobilise support and aspire to perform the elaborate sacrifice. This would have operated on at least two levels--the sight of the horse and its guards probably inspired awe in the minds of commoners. At the same time, the horse symbolised an explicit challenge to more powerful men who may have attempted to become rājās or were rājās

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[38] As Drekmeier (1962:27) observes, such rituals consolidated: "The values of the community, reminding individuals of shared purposes and representing, in simple dramatic form the essentials of social and religious relationships."

[39] This will be explored further in the next section.

themselves.[40] The sacrifice itself, moreover, provided an occasion for spectacular displays, both aural and visual, and would have conveyed a notion of the power of both the yajamāna and the priest.

At another level, the venue of the sacrifice witnessed the compilation and dissemination of a wide range of traditional lore during the pāriplava cycle, as noted earlier (Chapter V). What is significant is that the control over the communication of such lore was now taken over by the brāhmaṇas, operating within the context of a ritual which was intimately connected with the rājā. As a result earlier, and possibly independent traditions were now centralised and probably homogenised by the rājā and his supporters.[41]

The same occasion was also used to extol the achievements of the rājā. This was ensured through the songs of the vīnāgāthins or lute-players, a brāhmaṇa and a rājaṅya or a kṣatriya, who were expected to sing every day while the horse was away, during the morning and the evening respectively. While the theme of the songs of the brāhmaṇa centred around generosity and the sacrifices performed by the rājā, those of the kṣatriya related to his victories in battle (e.g., SB 13.1.5.6, BSS 15.8,9, ApSS 20.6.5,14). Thus, all those who attended the sacrifice not only heard their traditional lore, probably retold with suitable modifications, but also learnt about the rājā's exploits and abilities. The ritualised transmission

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[40] If the description of Yudhiṣṭhira's rājasūya in the Mahābhārata is any indication, this sacrifice was also accompanied by journeys to inform and appropriate wealth from potential rivals, who were then probably conciliated through invitations to witness the sacrifice and implicitly acquiesce in the claims of the successful yajamāna (MBH 2.23 ff).

[41] As Kurtz (1981:186) observes: "Rulers of inchoate states have to reduce religious heterogeneity and procure their own validating ideologies for the values which they are trying to inculcate in the polity."

of messages and information, moreover, meant that dialogues, discussions, and questions could be avoided. In other words, such information could not be immediately or explicitly challenged, the very context lending it an aura of sanctity. At another level, the kinds of themes chosen and the way in which the narratives were developed in concrete situations probably permitted the brāhmaṇa and the rājaṅya to exercise a certain pressure on the rājā to conform to the norms and ideals which were focused on.

Besides, in rituals such as the rājasūya (SB 5.4.2.3), aindra-mahābhiṣeka (AB 8.39.3), and aśvamedha (e.g., ApSS 20.4.3), the rājā or yajamāna was proclaimed as such by the priests. While it is frequently indicated that only a successful or powerful rājā could perform such sacrifices, the success or power of the rājā was explicitly recognised through the ritual, and the priests, who increasingly took over the task of according such recognition, clearly played a crucial role in announcing the status of the rājā in the context of such sacrifices.

And yet, as mentioned earlier, the performance of large-scale sacrifices, despite their obvious usefulness as occasions of communication, posed certain problems as well. We have seen how it may have become increasingly difficult to ensure the participation of the entire populace on such occasions, and in the absence of participation, any messages communicated through these rituals would have reached a relatively limited audience.

As such, there appears to have been a search for alternative channels of communication, reflected in the attempt to ensure the presence of brāhmaṇas within the household.[42] For instance, there

[42] While the need to communicate political messages may not provide the sole explanation for the attempt to brahmanise the practices associated with the household, the process of brahmanisation proved extremely valuable for the communication of such messages.

was an insistence on inviting brāhmaṇas for the śrāddha or funeral ceremony (e.g., GDS 15.9, VDS 11.29). The ritual, which, in the case of the male gṛhapati, marked the formal termination of the control exercised by the deceased and the takeover by his successor(s) was probably accorded a wider significance and recognition through the presence of brāhmaṇas.

At another level, there was an attempt to ensure daily contact with brāhmaṇas through the institution of the pañcamahāyajñas, the five great sacrifices (which, despite their name, did not involve elaborate rituals), in the course of which brāhmaṇas were to be accorded hospitality (e.g., AGS 1.1.2, PGS 2.9.11, BDS 2.6.11.5, VDS 11.5).[43] While such occasions were not explicitly specified as significant for the communication of messages, it is likely that they were used for the purpose.

The evidence regarding the development of ritual alternatives is, in a sense, more explicit. Here, two tendencies are discernible. On the one hand, we have evidence for the scaling down of sacrifices. Rituals such as the fortnightly darśapūrṇamāsa, for instance, could be performed either as an elaborate śrauta ritual with a full retinue of priests and the entire range of sacrificial fires, or as a relatively simple gṛhya or domestic sacrifice, where the presence of a priest was optional. What is significant is that the values communicated and sanctified through both levels of the ritual were more or less similar. For instance, the domestic version included the rāṣṭrabhṛt offerings (e.g., ApGS 2.7). These were literally

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[43] Such claims to hospitality were often reinforced by threats: a brāhmaṇa who was denied hospitality could apparently take away the merit of the household (VDS 8.6).

meant to uphold or bear the rāṣṭra. The fact that the householder was expected to offer the oblation meant that he was accorded recognition as a supporter of the realm (and presumably of the rājā as well). In other words, the bond between the rājā and the gṛhapati was reinforced through such rituals.[44] The relatively inexpensive nature of the sacrifice may have also contributed to its regular performance.

The other tendency was related to the brahmanisation of rites of passage. These included the śrāddha, referred to earlier, the upanayana, and marriage. While the details of the process will be discussed later (Chapter VIII), what is significant for the present is that brahmanisation was very often accompanied by what may be described as the politicisation of relations within the household. This was achieved, for instance, through the use of the jaya (literally victory) verses. These were supposed to have been conferred on Indra by Prajāpati, and were regarded as the means whereby the former obtained victory over the viś (PGS 1.5.9). The use of these verses was prescribed during marriage (ApGS 11.6), and during the sīmantonnayana (a ritual associated with the first pregnancy of the wife, ibid.:14.2), symbolising, in each case, the assertion of control by the husband over his wife. Its use was also prescribed during the upanayana (AGS 1.5.8) where it probably established the identity between the brahmacārin and Indra, and during the ritual performed by the snātaka on the successful completion of the period of brahmacarya (ApGS 12.9). Thus, the use of these verses was clearly viewed as a means of empowering a select social category.

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[44] Other instances of such rituals have been noted earlier (Chapter V).

The use of rituals for communication was accompanied by an attempt to standardise the qualities expected of the priests. These included learning, proper parentage, good speech, good looks, the right age, virtuousness, and following the prescribed occupations (e.g., GDS 11.13,14). The insistence on such attributes was probably necessary in a situation where disparate groups were coming into contact with one another. Obviously, not all the ritual or religious practices of such groups would have been useful from the point of view of the dominant political or religious categories which were emerging. As such, the need to restrict and define those who were eligible to participate in ritual occasions may have become more acute.

It is evident then that efforts were made to communicate the values associated with the new political order at a variety of levels. Such communications provided information of a certain kind, especially relating to what were regarded as the laudable achievements of the rājā. More important, however, they tried to ensure acceptance for the very institution of rājya. This was attempted, for instance, through the ritualisation of communications relating to the rājā, and through the development of the notion of the sacrosanct character of the man and the institution. At another level, a concerted effort was made to mobilise support for the rājā by connecting him with the household in general and with the male householder in particular. The latter resulted in a growing dependence on the priesthood for communicative purposes. The priests, as we have seen, were particularly valuable in creating "redundancy", i.e., in reiterating connections or justificationson a variety of occasions. Hence, it is not surprising that their role was crucial in ensuring the legitimation of rājya as well.

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VI

The means of communication we have examined were closely linked to the legitimation of rājya, to which we will now turn. The importance of the process of legitimation has been referred to earlier (Chapter I).[45] We had also noted in the case of the śreṣṭha, and, to a lesser extent, in connection with other positions of status as well, how religious or ritual means, by associating the positions implicitly or explicitly with notions of sacrality, were particularly important for conferring legitimacy on them. As we shall see, such associations with the sacred were especially close in the case of both the divine and the human rājās and it was this basic connection which was developed in a number of directions to confer legitimacy on the position of the rājā. At the same time, this intrinsic association of the rājā with the sacred was probably weakened by two developments--one, the emergence of a professional priesthood, whose very existence depended on its ability to establish and maintain a monopoly over definitions of the sacred, and the second, the development of the institution of rājya, which we have traced earlier (Chapters IV and V) and in the course of which the rājā moved away from the ideals associated with Varuṇa and Soma, and became more Indra-like, as noted earlier. As such, the rājā could probably no longer claim to be associated with the sacred on the earlier basis, and had to work out his position afresh. These developments are reflected in the tendency to evolve large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya, which we will examine below. However, this also was not adequate for legitimating rājya, and ultimately, as we shall see, alternative possibilities were explored.

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[45] In fact; "The legitimacy of the authority and political structures of early states was essential for their survival and their legitimation is an exorable and integral part of the process of early state development" (Kurtz 1981:177).

The association of both the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, with the sacred was especially close in both the early and the later Vedic traditions. Varuṇa, for instance, was thought to bring Agni to the sacrifice(RV 3.4.2). Besides, he was expected to protect what was well-offered (AB 3.13.14) and seize what was badly offered (PVB 15.7.7) in the sacrificial context.[46] Moreover, his permission was sought before performing a sacrifice (PVB 24.18.2,8).

If Varuṇa was assigned the role of guardian of the sacrifice, Soma was virtually identified with it (Deshmukh 1933:281, SB 3.9.4.23). Hence, if the attributes of the divine rājās reflected those of the early Vedic rājā, as argued earlier, then he was in all likelihood closely connected with the ritual.

In the early Vedic context, it is probable that this association was focused on the vidatha, an assembly where both divine and human rājās were expected to be present, and where sacrifices were performed (e.g., RV 3.3.3), probably accompanied by the distribution of wealth (ibid.:3.26.6).

The vidatha was evidently a popular assembly during the early Vedic phase.[47] However, it is virtually never mentioned in later literature. It is likely that this was partly owing to the particular form of the cult and the economic relations with which it was associated. While these may have been adequate in the context of a relatively undifferentiated socio-economic order, it is possible

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[46] Hence, it was recommended that prayers be offered to him to expiate mistakes committed during the sacrifice (BSS 14.24).

[47] This is suggested for instance by the fact that twenty-two of the forty hymns of the second mandala of the Rg Veda, ascribed to the Gṛtsamadas, end with prayers for brave sons capable of addressing the vidatha.

that gathering together in the vidatha to sacrifice or share wealth was probably no longer feasible in the more complex social situation which was emerging. It is also likely that it was not possible to raise or resolve the new issues which were acquiring importance through the relatively egalitarian framework provided by the vidatha. For instance, the problem of who was to be a rājā and how or why does not seem to have been posed in the context of the vidatha. As we shall see, such issues were sought to be resolved through the use of different sacral mechanisms.

What is nonetheless noteworthy is that while the nature of sacral activity changes, the rājā's links to the sacred continued to be reiterated. This is evident from both prescriptions and incidental references in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently. An instance of the first is provided by the prescription (AB 7.34.2) requiring members of the first three varṇas to request the kṣatriya for a place in which to perform the sacrifice. Even when the sacrifice declined in importance as a form of sacred activity and was replaced by an emphasis on acquiring sacred learning, the rājā remained connected with this sphere. Hence, Vedic learning was to stop on the death of the rājā (GDS 16.32), presumably because the existence of the rājā was regarded as essential for the pursuit of sacral activities. This was probably related to the notion of the intrinsic purity of the rājā (GDS 14.43, VDS 19.48).[48] As significant are references to rājās who were considered to be endowed with the highest forms of sacral knowledge. These included Pravāhana Jaivāli (CU 5.3.7), Aśvapati Kaikeya (ibid.:5.11.5) and Ajātaśatru (BAU 2.1.15).

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[48] The ADS (1.11.31.5) implicitly equates the rājā with a devatā or god by stating that one should not say anything harsh about either.

The rājā's generalised claims to connections with the sacred were not, however, adequate to legitimate his position in the later Vedic phase and subsequently. This was probably related to the changing nature of rājya, in which the problem of legitimation became more complex as the rājā aspired to assert control over different social categories and had to be able to win the support of different, often conflicting social groups.

The problem of legitimating rājya in the later Vedic phase is reflected in two tendencies explored in myths. On the one hand, we have references to the making of a rājā or the assumption of rājya by a particular god. For instance, the devas decide to make a rājā (rājānam karavāmahe) in order to ensure victory against the asuras (AB 1.3.3). Elsewhere (SB 2.6.4.2-3), Agni, Varuṇa and Indra agree to act as the rājās of the devas in their fight against Vṛtra. In both instances, the problem posed by a conflict was resolved through the setting up of a rājā.

The second possibility envisaged in myths involved a more or less similar resolution but emphasised an intermediate use of rituals. While these myths may have been developed to "explain" ritual activity, there are, as we shall see, significant differences between the description of rituals on the mythical and the human planes. More significantly, rājya on the human plane was rarely justified or legitimised in terms of leadership in battles or in terms of a contract between the people and the rājā. In fact, it was the second possibility of using rituals to both attain and justify rājya which was developed extensively. This was a significant shift, as it suggested that the legitimacy of rājya did not rest on a popular decision, but rather on an ability to perform

rituals which were concrete expressions of access to the sacred, and which, by virtually deifying the human rājā, served to establish claims to rājya on a basis which was very different from that of popular support.

The major sacrifices which legitimated rājya, the rājasūya, aśvamedha and vājapeya,[49] as noted earlier, often incorporated popular rituals such as variations on the soma sacrifice,[50] ritualised contests such as dicing (in the rājasūya) and chariot-racing (in the vājapeya) and rites associated with the agricultural cycle such as the cāturmāsyas (in the rājasūya). Besides, they were depicted as events of cosmogonic significance, through associations with Prajāpati who was either identified with the sacrifice (e.g., the rājasūya, SB 5.3.3.15) or with the sacrificial victim (e.g., with the aśvamedha horse, ibid.:13.1.1.1). At another level, they provided a means for organising and ordering social relations between and amongst men belonging to various varṇas and of regulating kinship ties amongst men, and the relationship between the genders. Thus, the rājā, who, as the yajamāna, was the focus of such rituals, was connected with a range of issues, and this connection, implying an ability to intervene and ensure the "proper" resolution of such issues, was sanctified through the ritual. In other words, such

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[49] A number of variations in the soma sacrifice were also prescribed as a means of attaining rājya. These included variations in the dvādaśāha (PVB 11.3.9), the pṛṣṭha ṣaḍaha (ibid.:12.10.4-5, 13.9.23), the dākṣāyaṇa yajña (SB 2.4.4.6), the rāṭ ekāha (PVB 19.1.2), the pravargya (BSS 10.16) and the durasa (ibid.:18.40).

[50] This was incorporated as the daśapeya which formed part of the rājasūya as noted earlier. The soma sacrifice was also included in the vājapeya (SB 5.1.3.1).

rituals provided both an occasion for delineating the social and economic policies associated with the rājā, and through the very process of delineation and sanctification, probably ensured their implementation as well.

Apart from linking together such broad-based concerns, the rituals were also explicitly regarded as occasions whereby the rājā's status was either potentially or actually transformed and recognised as such. For instance, the vājapeya was prescribed for the yajamāna who aspired to sāmrājya (SB 5.1.1.13) while the successful performance of the aśvamedha was thought to render a man fit for the abhiṣeka (ibid.:13.4.2.17), about which more later. The rājasūya, as its very name suggests, was viewed as a means of becoming a rājā (ibid.:5.1.1.12). The role of such rituals in legitimating the rājā's position was often recognised in no uncertain terms. Thus, in the context of the aśvamedha we are told that only a man endowed with a rāṣṭra could perform it. On the other hand, the successful performance of the ritual was supposed to lead to the acquisition of a rāṣṭra (ibid.:13.1.6.3).

The goals envisaged were expressed in concrete terms through visual displays and oral statements which acquired added significance in a context which was at once sacred and spectacular. One common device employed was that of the mounting of the throne (e.g., SB 5.4.4.1, in the context of the rājasūya). This provided a visible representation of the distinction between the rājā, associated with a unique seat, and the rest of those present at the sacrifice. At the same time, the physical act of sitting was invested with symbolic meaning, it being regarded as a means of making the rājā dhṛtavrata

and hence identical with Varuṇa (ibid.:5.4.4.5).[51] Similarly, in the aindramahābhiṣeka (AB 8.38.1), the mounting of the throne by Indra on the divine plane and the yajamāna on the human plane was thought to represent his accession to bhaujya, svārājya, vairājya, rājya, pārameṣṭhya, māhārajya, ādhipatya, svāvaśya, and atiṣṭhya.[52]

Central to the rituals legitimating rājya was, however, the abhiṣeka or the sprinkiling or anointing of the rājā with potent fluids.[53] This was viewed as a means of empowering the rājā (and of recognising his power).[54] Myths pertaining to the abhiṣeka suggest that initially the ritual was associated with an element of conditionality and involved the active participation of the people who

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[51] The throne was thought to be symbolic of the womb of kṣatra (ibid.:5.4.4.3), as noted earlier. The seating on the throne also formed part of the vājapeya (SB 5.2.1.22).

[52] Bhaujya probably indicated some kind of overlordship (Keith 1920:330). The last five terms are translated by Keith (ibid.: 330-331) as superior authority, great kingship, suzerainty, supremacy, and pre-eminence. The other terms have been examined in the previous chapters.

[53] According to Heesterman (1957:86) the term rājasūya originally referred to the unction water and was later extended to the entire ritual. The centrality of the abhiṣeka for legitimating rulership is also referred to in the Jātakas, where the term muddhābhisitta khattiya (a kṣatriya whose head has been anointed) occurs as a stereotyped term for describing rulers (Ghoshal 1966a:16-17). The importance of the abhiṣeka was also recognised in the Rāmāyaṇa (Brockington 1984:127). Incidentally, the aśvamedha, rājasūya, and vājapeya figure in what Brockington identifies as the first stage of the Rāmāyaṇa (ibid.:208). This would indicate their relative antiquity.

[54] For instance, the abhiṣeka during the rājasūya was viewed as a means of endowing the rājā with the dyumna or brilliance of Soma, the tejas or lustre of Agni, the varcas or splendour of Sūrya, the indriya or strength of Indra, the vīrya or valour of Mitra and Varuṇa, and the ojas or power of the Maruts (BSS 12.11). Such an understanding also served to identify the sacrificer with a range of deities, other examples of which will be noted below.

elevated one amongst themselves to the position of the rājā. For instance, the devas were thought to have performed the abhiṣeka of Agni in order to please him and ask for the things they wanted (SB 9.3.2.6). This evidently worked, and was explicitly recognised as analogous to the situation on the human plane. Elsewhere (AB 8.38.1), the devas are depicted as deciding to perform Indra's abhiṣeka on account of or in recognition of his strength and his ability to accomplish (probably desired objects).[55] Thus, there are indications that the rājā may have been selected by people on grounds of generosity or ability, including prowess and strength, this selection being demonstrated through the abhiṣeka. The fact that this was performed publicly provided for the dissemination of information regarding the rājā's change of status.

While the abhiṣeka was retained and even considerably elaborated in the ritual context,[56] the basis on which it was performed was evidently quite different, although the mythical associations were never explicitly repudiated. In the first place, the ability to get the abhiṣeka performed was now implicitly linked to the ability to get sacrifices performed. This in turn would have been related to access to economic resources and priestly support. In other words, popular support as a criterion for gaining acceptance as a rājā

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[55] Indra is characterised as ojiṣṭha, baliṣṭha, sahiṣṭha, sattama, and pārayiṣṇutama, i.e., the most powerful, strongest, ablest, most real, and the most able to accomplish.

[56] For instance, the use of seventeen different types of fluids described as rājasva (i.e., quickening or impelling the rājā) or rāṣṭrada (i.e., conferring the rāṣṭra) was prescribed in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.4.3,5). The use of the number seventeen, as noted earlier, would have implied an identity with Prajāpati.

was replaced by individual claims to the position on a different basis.[57]

At the same time, popular participation in the abhiṣeka was ritualised rather than being completely eliminated. This is evident from the rājasūya, for instance, where the abhiṣeka was to be performed by the adhvaryu, svā, rājaṅya, and vaiśya (SB 5.3.5.11-14).[58] The order in which the participants were ranked was clearly hierarchical, and points to their relative importance, with the priest being placed first, while the vaiśya, the representative of the people, ranked last.

Closely related to the abhiṣeka was the proclamation of the change of status of the rājā.[59] Here, once again, there is a divergence between the mythical and the ritual plane. In the context of the aindramahābhiṣeka, for instance, we are told that Indra was unable to display his vīrya (valour) till his change of status was proclaimed by the Viśvedevas (literally all-gods, frequently referred to as the divine viś). For the human rājā, however, the ability to proclaim the change of status was restricted to the

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[57] A somewhat similar shift is discernible in the context of the chariot race of the vājapeya. According to Gonda (1969:85), the race: "represents a test for recognising the ruler's superior valour and physical prowess and as a means of enabling him to prove himself the fittest man for kingship." While the race may have initially involved an actual contest, its ritualisation and the consequent certainty of the outcome meant that the position of the rājā was no longer determined on the basis of prowess, but rather on the ability to get the requisite ritual performed.

[58] In the Black Yajur Vedic tradition, the svā, literally one's own kinsman, was replaced by the janya, i.e., one of the people of the jana, who was placed fourth (e.g., BSS 12.9, ApSS 18.16.5).

[59] Such proclamations formed part of rituals such as the rājasūya (BSS 12.9) and the aśvamedha (ApSS 20.4.3).

rājakartṛs (literally rājā-makers, AB 8.39.3), specifically defined as the priests.[60]

This shift in the ritual context was, in fact, explicitly linked to the new definition of rājya which was emerging. For instance, in the context of the rājasūya (e.g., SB 5.3.3.12), the proclamation of the rājā by the priests was accompanied by the brāhmaṇas declaring themselves to be outside his purview, claiming exemption from being eaten, which, as noted earlier, was a common analogy for an appropriative relationship. In fact, if the rājā was no longer benevolent, then active popular support for proclaiming his change of status may have been less forthcoming. In such a situation, the rājā's dependence on the priesthood as an alternative, to sanctify his position, may have become even greater.

Initially, however, the rājā attempted to muster the support of other personnel as well. These included the sūta and grāmaṇī, who were regarded as arājanaḥ rājakṛtas (SB 3.4.1.7), i.e., non-rājās who were, at the same time, rājā-makers and who, amongst others, figured in the list of ratnins or jewels whose support was sought

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[60] A somewhat similar discrepancy between mythical explanations of the ritual and ritual practice is evident in the context of the upahavya (SSS 14.50.1). The myth which justified the ritual described it as a rite performed by the devas in order to regain Indra as their leader, as they feared that otherwise the asuras would overcome them. This would suggest a certain amount of popular involvement in choosing a leader. In the human ritual context, however, it was recommended for a rājā who wished to regain his rāṣṭra, with no reference to popular participation in the process.

for the rājā in the course of the ratnīnāmhavīṁsi of the rājasūya.[61] The formula used in connection with the offerings made by the rājā in the homes of the ratnins is significant--tasmāt eva etena sūyate, tam svam anapakraminam kurute (SB 5.3.1.1-13)[62]--"it is for him (i.e., the ratnin) that he (i.e., the rājā) is thereby consecrated. He (the rājā) thereby prevents him (the ratnin) from deserting him." Thus, the ritual was used to establish bonds between the rājā and those on whose political support he depended.[63]

At another level, attempts were made to widen the political scope of these rituals. Thus, while they were primarily viewed as a means of legitimately acquiring rājya, other political possibilities were often incorporated as well. For instance, the dīkṣā of the aśvamedha was viewed as a means of acquiring ādhipatya and svārājya, while the rājasūya was regarded as a means of acquiring bhaujya, vairājya, sāmrājya, svārājya (AB 7.35.6), and ādhipatya (BSS 10.56, SSS 15.12.1) as was the vājapeya (ASS 9.9.1). Such

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[61] The functions of most of the ratnins have been referred to earlier. The significance of the rite has been variously assessed. According to Altekar (1962:77), it created a "feeling of attachment and loyalty." Others such as Dharma (1947:223) and Law (1960:11) argue that inspite of its original significance, it was gradually reduced to a mere formality. Gonda (1969:43) and Heesterman (1957: 56) on the other hand, emphasise its non-political significance. According to the former, the twelve ratnins represented the twelve parts of the year, whereas the latter considers them to be symbolic of the womb or embryonic covers from which the yajamāna/rājā emerges.

[62] The alternative mantra prescribed in the Black Yajur Vedic tradition has been referred to earlier (Chapter V).

[63] Just as the position of the rājā was legitimised through rituals, so also that of the sūta, grāmaṇī, and sthapati was legitimised through the sūta sava (BSS 18.4, SSS 14.22.1), grāmaṇī sava (SSS 14.22.3), and sthapati sava (PVB 17.11.6, BSS 18.3, SSS 14.22.2) respectively. Most of these rituals included an abhiṣeka as well.

tendencies reached their culmination in the aindramahābhiṣeka which was performed for sāmrājya, bhaujya, svārājya, vairājya, and rājya (AB 8.38.3, 8.39.5).[64] In the same context, each of these possibilities of rulership/leadership was equated with rājya, by stating that rājās of the east were known as samrājs, those of the south as bhojas, those of the west as svarājs, those of the north as virājs, and those of madhyadeśa (literally the central land, and by extension the epicentre of civilisation) as rājās. This was clearly a means of encompassing diverse possibilities within the definition of rājya and may have been a means whereby individual rājās could extend their sphere of influence by claiming identity with local chiefs, possibly usurping their power and authority in the process. It is also likely that such identifications may have bolstered the position of the rājā in other ways as well. We had noted earlier (Chapter IV) that supremacy was not intrinsic to the definition of rājya. However, if the rājā was identified with the adhipati or the śreṣṭha, he would have acquired aceess to a different definition of power and authority. The continued identification with the virāj would, at the same time, have ensured popular support. Thus, alternative possibilities of leadership or rulership were assimilated to the definition of rājya for different reasons.

The use of rituals to assert an all-encompassing authority was accompanied by claims to divinity as well. As in the case of

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[64] In this context, Indra, and by extension the yajamāna, was thought to be born as the samrāj and sāmrājya, the bhoja and bhojapitṛ, svaraj and svārājya, virāj and vairājya, rājā and rājapitṛ, parameṣṭhin and pārameṣṭhya, kṣatra and kṣatriya, viśāmattṛ, purambhettṛ (destroyer of puras), asurānām hantṛ (destroyer of asuras, replaced by the janyamitrānām hantṛ on the human plane), and the protector of the brāhmaṇa and dharma.

the soma sacrifice and other rituals, the discovery and/or initial performance of the sacrifices which legitimated rājya was attributed to the gods. For instance, the rājasūya was thought to have been discovered by Varuṇa (SB 5.3.4.12), the aindramahābhiṣeka was supposed to have been performed by Prajāpati for Indra (AB 8.38.2), while the vājapeya was thought to have been performed by Bṛhaspati or Indra (SB 5.1.1.11). This meant that the rājā/yajamāna who followed in their footsteps was virtually recreating a divine act, and the ability to do so implied his identity with the gods.

A distinctive feature of the rājasūya was the attempt to link the rājā with a number of deities. For instance, the deities associated with the devasūhavīmśi (e.g., SB 5.3.3.1-13) included Savitṛ Satyaprasava, Agni Gṛhapati, Soma Vanaspati, Bṛhaspati Vācaspati, Indra Jyeṣṭha, Rudra Paśupati, Mitra Satya, and Varuṇa Dharmapati, each of whom was expected to endow the sacrificer with their characteristic attributes. The tendency to equate the human rājā with a range of deities may have also been useful as a means of ensuring the support of different social categories or people who probably identified more closely with one or the other deity.[65]

It is evident that the performance of such rituals reinforced the definition of rājya at a number of levels--the message that the rājā was unique and was essential for the existence of the social

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[65] In other rituals such as the vājapeya, greater emphasis was laid on establishing identity with a single deity, in this case Prajāpati. As Gonda (1986:175) observes: "The ceremony is completely saturated with the atmosphere of the Prajāpati theology and philosophy." Such identifications were established through component elements of the ritual as well. For instance, the bow given to the rājā in the rājasūya was equated with Indra's vajra or thunderbolt (BSS 12.9).

and natural order was reiterated time and again by deifying the rājā, by linking him up with a range of socio-economic issues, and by explicitly recognising his status. However, the need to reiterate the message repeatedly points to a situation where acceptance may not have been complete. As much is suggested by the existence of rituals with provisions for reinstating a rājā. These included the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.9.3.1-6) and the punarābhiṣeka (AB 8.37.1).[66] As Roy (1984:88) observes, the existence of such rituals indicates that rājās could be and probably were challenged and hence had to take recourse to such devices.

It is likely that it was in this context that an effort was made to define an exclusive ritual tradition related to the rājās. This involved, on the one hand, a marginalisation of alternative ritual traditions and cults, and the consolidation of a single, homogeneous tradition to which the rājā could appeal.

The first process is indicated by the treatment accorded to the sthapati. The evidence available from the later Vedic tradition indicates that the sthapati was associated with ritual activities, performing sacrifices such as sattras for vrātyas (PVB 24.18.2), the vrātyastoma (BSS 18.26) and the sautrāmaṇī (SB 12.8.1.17).[67] Moreover, the sthapati was conceived of as being endowed with brahmavarcas and tejas (ibid.), attributes which were otherwise

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[66] Other rituals recommended for a similar end included the tīvra soma ekāha (PVB 18.5.5) and the upahavya (SSS 14.50.1).

[67] Thus, Aupoditi Gaupālāyana Vaiyāghrapadya was supposed to have helped the Kurus to perform the vrātyastoma (BSS 18.24), whereas Revottara Cākra performed it for Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana (SB 12.9.3.2), and was considered as an authority on the sacrifice (ibid.:12.8.1.17).

considered typical of the brāhmaṇa. However, both the sthapatis and the rituals with which they were associated were gradually marginalised. In the post-Vedic tradition, the former was secularised completely,[68] while the rituals with which he was associated, the vrātyastoma and the sautrāmaṇī, although incorporated within the brahmanical tradition, were not regarded as of central significance for the attainment of rājya.

The second process was reflected in the development and preservation of genealogies of the performers of rituals such as the aindramahābhiṣeka (AB 8.39.7-9), aśvamedha (SB 13.5.4.1-23 ; SSS 16.8.27) and rājasūya (AB 7.35.8). Such genealogies were probably important for both the priests and the rājās. The former could cite ppecedents and encourage the performance of rituals, while the latter could acquire distinction and recognition through the same means by identifying with predecessors who were recognised as illustrious.

Thus, the association with a well-defined ritual tradition of rājya was recognised as important.[69] It is this which probably explains the belief that a rājā alone could make another man a rājā (PVB 19.1.2).[70] This was true in a number of ways. A rājā's success was probably measured in terms of other rājās-thus each rājā

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[68] He was regarded as an architect, master builder, carpenter, or wheelwright in the post-Vedic tradition (SED:s.v.).

[69] That this persisted well beyond the period under consideration is evident from epigraphic records regarding the performance of the vājapeya and the aśvamedha, and to a lesser extent, the rājasūya, almost throughout the historical period, down to late medieval times (Kashikar and Parpola 1986:204 ff).

[70] Rājā rājānam kuryāt.

provided the context within which other similar leaders could emerge. At another level, rājās may have supported one another against alternative forms of leadership which were regarded as threatening.[71] Hence, although individual rājās may have competed with one another, there were certain shared interests in the development and maintenance of the institution which bound them together so that the very existence of one provided an example of and a means of legitimating the position of others.[72]

While the importance of large-scale sacrifices was never explicitly negated, and they continued to be performed occasionally till the 17th and 18th centuries (Kashikar and Parpola 1986:204 ff), alternative means of legitimation were also developed, two of which were particularly significant.

The first involved the incorporation of the messages central to the legitimation of rājya within the domestic cult. This was achieved through the explicit association of the divine rājās with specific routine rituals such as the daily agnihotra and the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifices as noted earlier, as well as through associating them with saṁskāras. In most cases, this meant identifying the rājā with the gṛhapati. More generally, the social, economic, and even cosmogonic goals envisaged for such rituals were brought into line with those associated with the major sacrifices referred to earlier.[73] This shift, the reasons for which have been

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[71] This is explicitly evident in the hostility towards the gaṇasaṁghas in a slightly different context.

[72] It is likely that this connection operated both synchronically and diachronically.

[73] Specific examples of this will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

explored earlier, permitted legitimation with a certain regularity and with an almost uniform intensity. While large-scale sacrifices may have impressed witnesses or participants with a sense of the power and importance of the rājā, it may have been more difficult to sustain this impression on a long-term basis. The transfer of similar values to the domestic cult provided for precisely this situation, ensuring as it did the sustenance of the notions related to rājya on a virtually day-to day basis.

The second means of legitimating rājya which was adopted was based on the increasing emphasis on the rājā's role as the upholder of dharma referred to earlier (Chapter V). This implied that the existence of the rājā was essential for the maintenance of the social order. Given the scope of dharma, which, as we have seen, could potentially embrace virtually every aspect of human activity, it meant that rājya was intrinsic to the social order.[74] In other words, the means whereby rājya was legitimised were universalised and were no longer restricted to specific sacrificial occasions, whether large-scale or domestic.

Thus the process whereby rājya was legitimated developed in a fairly complex manner during the period under consideration. Briefly, a situation in which problems of legitimation were not central gradually gave way to one in which various possibilities were explored. Such possibilities were closely related to notions of sacrality with which the rājā seems to have been intrinsically

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[74] A somewhat similar development is discernible in medieval south India, where: "The claim to royal authority changed from one based upon royal sacrifice and genealogy, traced through royal yajamānas and fortified by military prowess, to a claim of authority based solely upon kingly maintenance of dharma and upon royal prestation (dāna)" (Stein 1984:29).

associated even during the early Vedic phase. The emphasis on the sacred basis of rājya in the later Vedic period and subsequently, however, implied a shift from the early Vedic notions of rājya. The rājā no longer obtained unchallenged popular support, but had to ensure such support through complex rituals, which increased his dependence on the priesthood. However, the problem of ensuring the participation of people in such rituals remained. Hence, an attempt was made to integrate the ideals of rājya with those of the household. Thus, the rājā could be connected with each and every household, or at least with its head. In other words, an attempt was made to take the rājā to the people rather than bring the people to the rājā.

It is evident then, that the structures of support which developed in connection with rājya underwent a number of changes during the period under consideration. Thus, voluntary gifts to the rājā were gradually systematised through the use of rituals and overtly coercive mechanisms. Related to this, the latter were systematised and transformed--the ability to fight was now concentrated in the hands of a few--those who were connected with the chariot. At another level, there was an attempt to develop the notion of the rājā as a wielder of daṇḍa, with wide-ranging social implications. Besides, efforts were made to develop a range of communication networks. Simultaneously, a variety of means were used to legitimise the position of the rājā. As we have seen, these changes were related to the emergence of a number of social categories which provided the context within which these structures of support emerged. We will explore this context in greater detail in the next two chapters.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONTEXT OF RĀJYA (1): FROM VIŚ TO VARṆA

> The brāhmaṇa was his face, from the rājaṅya was made his arms, what was his thigh formed the vaiśya, the śūdra was born from his feet.
>
> Ṛg Veda

I

The influence of the context of rājya on the development of the institution has been implicit in much of the preceding discussion. We had seen, for instance, how the definition of rājya, the access of the rājā to material resources, the social role of the rājā, and the systems of institutional support which evolved in conjunction with rājya were related developments. Thus, rājya emerged, and the position of the rājā was consolidated in a specific social context. As suggested earlier, this context both influenced the development of rājya and was in turn influenced by it.

Some of the changes in the social context resulted from the attempts of rājās to widen their spheres of influence. Others were probably related to different processes which were not (or could not be) directly controlled by the rājā. Both kinds of changes were politically significant--while this may be obvious in the first case, it was equally true of the second, which delineated the limits within which the rājā functioned and pointed to the existence of alternative sources of power and authority which could not be effectively challenged or undermined.

It is likely that varṇa, which became virtually synonymous with a unique system of social classification, emerged in this context. The discussion on varṇa within the brahmanical tradition represented both an attempt to understand the process of change as well as to direct them by the brāhmaṇas, who claimed the highest positi within the hierarchy. Not surprisingly, the two aims often led to contradictions and incongruities evident in the description of social conditions which on the one hand were emerging or existed and, on the other, were conceived of as the ideal. While efforts were made to work around such problems, these were not entirely successful in coping with them. As such, the evidence provided by the brahmanical tradition, despite its inherent biases referred to earlier (Chapter I), provides us with a framework for examining the changing social context.

Broadly, the possibility of two, inter-related processes of change may be envisaged. We had argued earlier, in the analysis of the pāriplava cycle, that the process whereby the institution of rājya was established or consolidated brought together different peoples whose status was initially recognised as more or less identical, but who, in coming into contact with one another, were gradually related, not on a basis of equality, but on a hierarchical basis, with those who controlled the process of interaction assuming positions of dominance. At the same time, it is likely that changes were occurring within each of these units as well. What emerged

as the varṇa hierarchy probably developed as a result of both these processes.[1]

The complex social changes which resulted are reflected in the terminology used to define society and social units. In the early, and to a certain extent in the later Vedic tradition as well, one of the commonest terms used to denote both the totality of human society as well as specific, more or less similar and independent units which constituted the whole was the viś (R.S.Sharma 1983a:48).[2] Moreover, both divine and human leaders or rulers were conceived of in terms of the viś. These included divine viśpatis, such as Indra (RV 3.40.3) and Agni (ibid.:2.1.8)[3] and human rājās, who were often specifically proclaimed as rājās of the viś, as noted earlier (Chapter IV).

What is as significant is that those who were outside a particular social unit were also conceived of as constituting a viś. This is evident from references to the dāsa viś (RV 2.11.4).

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[1]The process of growing interaction amongst the viś may be conceived of as follows: an initial stage, of marginal contact amongst the viś, each of which may have had a distinct socio-economic system. In the second stage, members of one viś establish closer links with those of the others. In the process, those assuming the initiative in establishing such contacts also assert their dominance over the relationships amongst different viś. Thus, differentiation amongst the viś is likely. At the same time, the fact that not every member of the dominating or dominated viś had equal or identical access to the means of communication would have meant that differentiation could and probably did take place within each viś as well.

[2]For instance, the Viśvedevas, regarded as the divine equivalent of the viś, were thought to be sarva or all (SB 3.9.1.13).

[3]There is also a reference to a divine viśpatnī, Sinīvālī (RV 2.32.7), the term being translated as the woman head of a clan (Jaiswal 1981:56).

It is noteworthy that while the dāsas were often regarded as enemies, and prayers were offered in order to overcome them, they were, at the same time, thought to be more or less similar to those who opposed them, as is evident from their designation as a viś. A similar understanding of different peoples constituting more or less similar social units was evident in the context of the pāriplava cycle, referred to earlier (Chapter V).

This relatively simple system of social classification gave way to a more complex one. This is reflected, to an extent, in the use of the word varṇa instead of viś to designate opposed social groups, typified in the notion of the ārya varṇa as opposed to the Dasyus (RV 3.34.9), this duality being replaced by that between the ārya and the śūdra in the later Vedic tradition (PVB 5.5.14, SB 12.9.2.3). While the usage of the term varṇa in these contexts was apparently synonymous with the earlier term viś, this similarity was superficial. This is evident from the fact that while a viś could be conceived of as a total, holistic unit, a varṇa was defined and acquired significance only in terms of other varṇas. In other words, the shift from defining the social unit in terms of a single viś to defining it in terms of two or more varṇas points to the growing importance of social differentiation. It is likely that the shift in terminology from viś to varṇa, literally colour, was also a means of focusing on differences amongst groups which were envisaged as functioning within a common framework--while all of the groups were equated with varṇas or colours, each varṇa was different.

Another dimension of the same process is reflected in the tendency to use the term viś or vaiśya (literally of the viś) for one of the varṇas rather than for the entire social unit. This

shrinking of the semantic significance of the term is evident, for instance, in stereotyped lists of social categories, which frequently included the brahma, kṣatra, and viś (SB 4.2.2.14, SSS 4.9.2).[4] Thus, what initially represented the whole, as is evident, for instance, in references to rājās of the viś, was increasingly viewed as no more than a part of a more complex unit.

The growing emphasis on classifying the social order in terms of varṇas did not, however, lead to the immediate standardisation of the four-fold system, consisting of the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra. This is evident from variations in the order in which the varṇas are referred to. In one instance (SB 13.8.3.11), the kṣatriya was placed on top of the hierarchy, whereas in another instance (ibid.:1.1.4.12), the brāhmaṇa was followed by the vaiśya, rājaṅyabandhu, and śūdra.[5] In other words, while the process of of social differentiation was recognised, the relative position of specific social categories was more fluid and open to change. It was only in the Dharma Sūtras that the four-fold order was standardised (e.g., ADS 1.1.1.4, BDS 1.8.16.1, VDS 2.1). While this may suggest an element of stability, the constant need to reiterate the four-fold division and its significance suggest that this may have been challenged as well.

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[4]The SB (4.2.2.14) refers to the set of three categories as sarva or all.

[5]The first instance occurs in the context of the height of the funeral mound, while the second instance occurs in the context of the new and full moon sacrifice. Further variations include references to the typical gataśrīs (BSS 17.49), consisting of the śuśruvat (the learned brāhmaṇa), the grāmaṇī (a vaiśya) and the rājaṅya, enumerated in that order.

Both the attempts to crystallise social differentiation in terms of varṇa and the challenges to this process centred around certain crucial social issues. For the present we will focus on three areas whose importance has been evident throughout the preceding discussion. These include access to and control over the pre-requisites of material well-being, political power and authority, and the domain of the sacred. For each of these areas, we will examine whether access and/or control were defined in terms of varṇa, and whether attempts were made to challenge and/or reinforce such definitions. For instance, we will focus on the development of systems of exchange, the control exercised over such systems, and their implications for political relations.

The second area of exploration will centre on the degree to which access to positions of status was determined on the basis of varṇa. As noted earlier, almost all the incumbents of such positions were conceived of as endowed with kṣatra. Nevertheless, there are indications that this definition was arrived at through a series of conflicts, which we will examine in detail.

We will next focus on the links envisaged between varṇa affiliation and the realm of the sacred. The importance of this realm in legitimating both specific elements of the socio-political order as well as the entire social framework has been referred to earlier (Chapters II-IV). Here we will explore the question of access to the sacred as illustrative of the problems and possibilities inherent in the development of intra and inter-varṇa relationships.

Finally, we will examine the means whereby the ordering of the varṇas was legitimated and consolidated. The processes whereby

legitimation was attempted were varied. Such variations, we will argue, were related in part to the difficulties inherent in establishing and maintaining the order in a situation where each social category was constantly engaged in a struggle to define and maintain exclusive spheres for itself, and where others frequently challenged this (Chapter V).

Turning to the specific sources relevant for an understanding of varṇa, mythical evidence pertaining to the hierarchy may be divided into two broad categories. On the one hand we have evidence relating to the gods, who were occasionally identified in terms of varṇa. For instance, Bṛhaspati or Brahmaṇaspati (RV 2.24.9), and, to a lesser extent, Agni (Chapters II and III), were equated with the first varṇa, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma and Yama with the second varṇa (Chapters II, IV, V), and the Viśvedevas and the Maruts with the third varṇa (Chapter II), while Pūṣan was occasionally identified with the śūdra (BAU 1.4.13). The attributes associated with the gods, many of which have been referred to earlier, are useful in enabling us to determine the features associated with specific varṇas. Besides, in instances where a single deity such as Agni was considered typical of more than one varṇa, it is likely that the difference between the two varṇas (in this case the brahma and kṣatra) were not as yet sharply delineated. At another level, creation myths such as the Puruṣasūkta and its variants were reiterated almost throughout the brahmanical tradition and provide us with data pertaining to the legitimation of the varṇa-based order.[6]

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[6]Incidentally, in the Puruṣasūkta itself (RV 10.90.13) Indra and Agni are referred to as sharing a common birth from the face or mouth of the puruṣa while Vāyu is born from his breath. The creation of the other deities is not referred to. Besides, none of these deities is associated with the varṇas.

The legitimation of varṇa was, however, more systematically attempted through a range of rituals and prescriptions. The former included both large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya and aśvamedha, as noted earlier, as well as domestic rites of passage and sacrifices. As we have argued earlier, the use of a range of means of legitimation points to the importance of the issues at stake. Besides, there are incidental references, both general and specific, to men belonging to various varṇas. These are particularly useful in corroborating or modifying analyses based on other types of evidence.

Before we proceed to a detailed discussion of varṇa, it is important to note that varṇa was one amongst a number of means of defining and organising social (and by extension political) relations. This is evident from references to varṇadharma being modified according to deśa, jāti, and kuladharma (VDS 19.7), i.e., the precepts and practices specific to regions, social categories, and kin groups. However, the distinctive elements of such dharmas are not discussed. Hence, although it is likely that some of these may have run counter to the definition of varṇadharma, we are not in a position to determine the exact nature of the relationship between and amongst these spheres. What needs to be borne in mind is that varṇa represented one, possibly the most important institutionalisation of social relationships. The specific nature of the institution was, moreover, politically significant, as it rested on inegalitarian ties amongst men belonging to various varṇas. As such, the development of the institution was closely related to the institutionalisation of political power. Hence, although an analysis of varṇa is not synonymous with an analysis of the entire social order, it is important in focusing attention on significant socio-political

II

The importance of access to productive resources or produce and mechanisms of exchange as a basis for claiming power or authority is widely recognised. Besides, we have seen how, in specific instances, attempts were made to direct, manipulate and control exchange networks.[7] Here we will explore the extent to which these economic processes were structured, ideally and actually, along varṇa lines. While much of the available information within the brahmanical tradition pertains to ritual exchanges such as dāna and dakṣiṇā, which have been referred to earlier (Chapters II-IV), other kinds of exchanges associated with tribute or tax collection, trade, and the exchange of labour are also occasionally focused on. As we shall see, these point to the problems inherent in forcing economic relationships within the varṇa framework[8] and suggest the existence and emergence of alternative, occasionally conflicting bases of power.

Not surprisingly, most of these systems of exchange were discussed at length in the human context--through rituals and prescriptions. While there are some references to devas receiving bali (Chapter II), there are virtually no myths pertaining to the giving and receiving of dakṣiṇā and dāna, or of the newer forms of taxes,

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[7] The success of such attempts would in all likelihood have generated pressures on systems of production as well, as forms of production geared to meet the requirements of such exchanges would have been encouraged at the cost of others. The evidence for, and the socio-political implications of such changes will be discussed in the next chapter.

[8] As R.S.Sharma (1983a:74) points out with reference to the later Vedic period: "These (varṇas) cannot be regarded as four separate social classes in the sense that some of them owned land, cattle, pasture grounds and implements and others were completely deprived of them."

or of the devas engaging in trade or service. Clearly, the issues posed by these exchanges could not be reconciled with the values embedded in the earlier mythological tradition and were hence explored at a different level.

The kinds of exchange on which the brahmanical tradition (understandably enough) furnishes us with the maximum information were ritual in nature. These included dakṣiṇā and dāna, both of which were supposed to accrue to brāhmaṇas in sacrificial and other ritual contexts. The objects transferred in such exchanges included a range of animals (e.g., BSS 2.7, 11.6), grain or grain produce (ibid.:2.7), vehicles, mainly chariots and carts (ibid.:12.4), cloth (e.g., ApSS 19.13.14), pots (ibid.:22.9.18), metals, especially gold (ibid.:17.23.5), and to a lesser extent, silver (BSS 15.3),[9] slaves or serving people (e.g., SSS 13.29.21), and, very rarely, land (e.g., SSS 16.9.18-21).

Dakṣiṇā was expected from the yajamāna or sacrificer, no sacrifice being complete without it. This meant, in effect, that it was obtained from members of the first three varṇas who had legitimate access to the sacrificial ritual. Dāna, likewise, was ideally a duty prescribed for members of the first three varṇas (e.g., ADS 2.5.10.4-7, GDS 10.1, BDS 1.10.18.2-4, VDS 2.14,16,18), during rites of passage such as birth (SGS 1.24.13), the first cutting of the hair (ApGS 16.4, PGS 2.1.5, KGS 2.3.33), the upanayana or initiation (ApGS 11.17), the completion of Vedic learning (AGS 3.8.6, SGS 1.28.21), marriage (AGS 1.8.14, ApGS 9.4, SGS 1.11.8), and the

[9] Gifts of utilitarian metals such as copper and iron were relatively rare.

śrāddha (PGS 3.10.48, ADS 2.8.19.16).[10] Thus, those who could legitimately participate in such ritual exchanges were men of the first three varṇas. More importantly, while men of the first varṇa could participate in such exchanges as both donor and donee, it was their role in the latter capacity which was regarded as particularly significant and sanctifying,[11] and which conferred a certain prestige on such exchanges.

It is in this context that the means whereby brāhmaṇas were expected to acquire wealth or earn their livelihood as standardised in the later Dharma Sūtras (e.g., GDS 10.2, BDS 1.10.18.2, VDS 16.16) needs to be viewed. These included performing sacrifices, getting sacrifices performed, giving and receiving gifts, and learning and teaching. While none of these activities were directly linked to production, they were connected with ritual exchange networks. As noted earlier, this is obvious in the case of the first two sets of activities. Although less apparent, learning and teaching the sacred lore was, at one level, a means whereby the personnel considered eligible to participate in such exchanges could be trained. Hence it is not surprising that the learned brāhmaṇa (śuśruvat) was regarded as one who had attained prosperity (gataśrī, BSS 17.49, SSS 2.6.5). Very often, moreover, the ideal donee was explicitly

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[10] Gifts to brāhmaṇas were also recommended as a form of penance (e.g., BDS 3.10.15).

[11] As opposed to this, the pitṛs were supposed to refuse the offerings of a man who did not accept a gift, while the sacrificial fire was thought to refuse to carry his offerings to the gods (VDS 14.18).

expected tc be learned (SGS 1.2.3, ADS 2.6.15.11, GDS 5.21, VDS 6.26).[12] At anctner level, the successful completion of the period of Vedic learning was marked by the giving of the veda dakṣiṇā (ADS 1.2.7.19), the teacher, presumably a learned brāhmaṇa, being directly rewarded.[13]

We had argued earlier (Chapters II, IV), that dakṣiṇā and dāna implied a siphoning off of some productive resources (especially in the form of cattle) and produce from general circulation and permitted their concentration in the hands of the priestly category. While this did nct at any stage lead to a mcnopoly over productive resources, it meant that a part of the produce of agriculturists and craft specialisits was diverted through channels of controlled exchange. Given the fact that participation in such exchanges was consistently portrayed as prestigious and/or meritorious, it is evident that primary producers were subjected tc certain pressures to produce in order to make gifts. In other words, although brāhmaṇas could not directly control productive resources, they could exert pressure to ensure production for what was, in tangible terms, an unequal system of exchange.

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[12] According to the GDS (5.21) a gift to a non-brāhmaṇa was equal to its material worth, that to a brāhmaṇa was worth twice as much, that to a śrotriya (a brāhmaṇa versed in the śrutis or revealed lore) was worth a thousand fold, and that to a vedapāraga (literally one who has crossed or mastered the Vedas) led to limitless rewards. Even the simple offering of food to a learned brāhmaṇa was considered to be better than the agnihotra (VDS 30.7). As opposed to this, the donor could not attain heaven even if he gave a cow, or a horse, gold or land, to an unlearned brāhmaṇa who neglected the prescribed ritual duties (VDS 28.17).

[13] Gifts to the teacher were also recommended even after the period of studentship was over (SGS 3.1.18).

At the same time, there are indications that the attempt to define the significance and nature of such exchanges was not entirely successful. This is evident for instance, in the occasional denigration of those who depended on gifts (e.g., AB 7.35.3, BDS 2.2.4.26), which suggests that the brahmanical perception of the donee as deserving of respect was not necessarily universally accepted.

At another level, and more importantly, the difficulties in enforcing the system of gift-giving are reflected in the development of a number of alternative provisions governing such exchanges within the later brahmanical tradition. These often widened the range of participants. Thus, brāhmaṇas were permitted to accept gifts even from śūdras under certain "difficult" circumstances (GDS 7.4), and in case material support was required on occasions such as marriage or for the performance of religious rites (ibid.:18.27). While this permitted brāhmaṇas to claim access to the resources of virtually every social category, it also implied that the brāhmaṇas' effort to acquire such resources from the more prestigious social categories was not uniformly successful.

That brāhmaṇas faced problems in their attempt to ensure material well-being through gifts is also indicated by provisions for accepting virtually anything that was offered. These included gifts of water, seats, umbrellas, shoes (VDS 29.12,13, 15, 18), as well as more substantial gifts such as houses or vehicles (ibid.:29.14).[14]

[14] Efforts were also made to ensure generosity through threats. For instance, if a brāhmaṇa who desired hospitality did not receive it, he was thought to be capable of destroying the spiritual merit (sukṛta) of the defaulting host (VDS 8.6). At another level, brāhmaṇas sought to bolster their position by claiming to be the sole donors of vidyā or learning, which was intangible, but was, at the same time, portrayed as the most meritorious of gifts (ibid.:29.19).

Almost simultaneously, brāhmaṇas were "permitted" to pursue alternative occupations during crises. These alternatives included agriculture (GDS 10.5, BDS 2.2.4.20-21), trade (ADS 1.7.20.11, GDS 10.5), and usury (GDS 10.6, BDS 1.5.10.26, VDS 2.43). In such cases it was recognised that the brāhmaṇas in question were no longer eligible to participate in the more prestigious if less profitable exchanges associated with rituals (GDS 15.17, BDS 1.5.10.29,31).[15]

It is evident then, that the attempt to channelise access to produce or productive resources through the network of ritual exchanges was not very successful. This is reflected, as noted above, in the tendency to widen the network to include more donors and gifts, as well as in the reluctant recognition of alternative means of livelihood. Besides, the very perception of ritual exchanges as prestigious seems to have been challenged.

The failure to develop the system of ritual exchange was related to the emergence of alternative systems of exchange, which could not be ritualised, and hence could not be controlled directly by the priesthood. These included the development of systems of tribute and taxation, details of which have been referred to earlier (Chapters II,IV,VI).

In terms of the varṇa hierarchy, access to the second form of exchange was restricted to the kṣatriya or the rājaṅya. This is evident from the specific means of livelihood prescribed for this category, which included daṇḍa or the administration of justice,

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[15] More generally, the BDS (1.5.10.25) states that such brāhmaṇas could be treated as śūdras. That brāhmaṇas actually did follow a range of occupations is suggested by the Jātakas, which refer to brāhmaṇa physicians, soldiers, cultivators, tradesmen, shepherds, carpenters, and hunters (Dutt 1968:218).

and yuddha or participating in battles (ADS 2.5.10. 6).[16] The performance of such functions was often explicitly linked to the ability to legitimately collect taxes (BDS 1.10.18.1, VDS 1.42).

The ability to collect tribute or taxes in a sacrificial or non-sacrificial context implied, as in the case of the priesthood, degree of control over produce or productive resources. That such control was exercised fairly successfully is evident from incident references to kṣatriyas or rājaṅyas as prosperous or wealthy (BSS 17.49, ApSS 5.14.1).[17] Given the fact that the kṣatriya or rājaṅy was often explicitly characterised as non-producing (SB 8.7.1.2, 8.7.2.2), such prosperity indicated a fair amount of success in channelling the flow of goods and services from the primary produc to those who claimed to be representatives of the second varṇa.

The success of the rājaṅya or kṣatriya in acquiring access t produce is also reflected in the relatively meagre discussion on the alternative means of livelihood open to them in times of distr While the possibility of adopting the activities of the vaiśya (vaiśyakarma) are recognised (GDS 7.26), this is rarely discussed length. This may either indicate that the subject was not of cent concern to the brahmanical authorities, or, alternatively, that su

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[16] Saṁgrāmika vitta or the wealth (loot) obtained from warfar was recognised as an important means of livelihood for the kṣatriy (GDS 10.19). Apart from these means of livelihood which were uniq to the kṣatriya, he was expected to participate in ritual exchange as well (BDS 1.10.18.3).

[17] In the first instance, the rājaṅya figures amongst those regarded as gataśri, while in the latter case he is regarded as bahupuṣṭa (literally possessed of many kinds of nourishment). Elsewhere (SB 2.3.4.6), praising a kṣatriya is described as a mean obtaining something from him. The ability to give indicates a prior control over that which is donated.

variations were less real, and were hence simply recognised as a theoretical possibility.[18]

The growing ability of the rājā and his supporters to obtain tribute or taxes was closely related to the changing rājā-viś relationship referred to earlier (Chapter v). That this was associated with a transformation in the forms of exchange which bound the two categories is evident from the contrast between the position of the viś in myths, and that accorded to it in rituals.

Myths, which probably reflect an earlier situation, frequently refer to the viś getting a share in whatever the kṣatriya wins. In one instance (SB 2.4.3.4-6), Indra and Agni, symbolic of the kṣatra, were conceived of as winning a race. However, the Viśvedevas, the divine counterpart of the viś, were accorded a share in the spoils of victory on the ground that the viś had a share in whatever was won by the kṣatra.[19]

References to the viś receiving a share, or to ensuring a share for the viś through ritual or other means are virtually non-existent in the later Vedic ritual context. What is more, the kṣatra was conceived of as appropriating the resources of the viś, such appropriation being legitimated through a range of rituals (Chapters II-IV). Thus, the viś was conceived of as food for the kṣatra (SB 4.2.1.17, 13.2.9.8, AB 7.35.3), and rituals were manipulated to ensure that the kṣatra obtained a share in whatever belonged to the viś (SB 1.3.2.15). In other words, there was a

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[18] The discussion of alternative occupations permissible to the vaiśya is almost identical, probably for similar reasons.

[19] In another instance (SB 6.6.1.11), the Ādityas, representing the viś, were conceived of as receiving a bhāga.

virtual reversal of the kṣatra-viś relationship as envisaged in earlier myths.

The attempts to obtain a share of the produce of the viś indicate that the viś itself was now in a position to generate or acquire resources which the kṣatriya could not control directly. In such a situation, the kṣatriya or rājā was implicitly if not explicitly dependent on the viś. As much is evident from the prescription of a range of rituals devised to coerce or cajole the viś into submission. These included, as we have seen, variations on the soma sacrifice, as well as more complex rituals such as the rājasūya and aśvamedha.

Incidental references also point to the prosperity of the viś or vaiśya. A typical viś was characterised as bahupaśu or possessed of many animals (PVB 6.1.10) and was also regarded as symbolic of puṣṭi or nourishment (AA 1.1.1.6).[20] Besides, a vaiśya was expected to tide over his misfortunes through his dhana or wealth (VDS 26.16) This implied that the vaiśya was normally wealthy. In fact, this was thought to constitute the basis of his strength. Such prosperity was, moreover, implicitly, if not explicitly, connected with the typical means of livelihood of the vaiśya, which included agriculture, trade, and, occasionally, usury (ADS 2.5.10.7, GDS 10.48, BDS 1.10.18.4, VDS 2.19). What is noteworthy is that agriculture or cattle-rearing as envisaged for the vaiśya did not imply subsistence activities but represented production for exchange. In other words, those classified as vaiśyas were gradually opening up new networks of exchange, or developing earlier ones along new lines. While the development of

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[20] The vaiśya was also regarded as bahupuṣṭa (ApSS 5.14.1), while the grāmaṇī, as noted earlier, figured amongst the gataśrī (BSS 17.49).

such networks may have been related to and encouraged by the growth of communications for political and/or ritual requirements, they were relatively autonomous, and could not be subjected to direct political or ritual control.[21]

The economic activities associated with the śūdra were almost as difficult to control. Theoretically, the śūdra was assigned the duty of paricaryā or servitude (GDS 10.56, BDS 1.10.18.5, VDS 2.20) i.e., he had the right to participate only in exchanges of labour which were ideally not rewarded in tangible terms. In practice, however, the possibility of some śūdras acquiring wealth was recognised almost throughout the brahmanical tradition. For instance, a śūdra could be bahupaśu (possessed of numerous cattle, PVB 6.1.11) or bahupuṣṭa (ApSS 5.14.1).[22] Besides, the śūdra, like the vaiśya, was expected to tide over misfortune through the use of his wealth (VDS 26.16).

It is evident then that a wide range of systems of exchange evolved during the period under consideration. This may have been related to the coming together of different peoples, referred to earlier. Each such group probably had its own system of exchange. In a situation where they were brought into contact with one another, the relation amongst such forms of exchange in terms of the resources and personnel specific to each required definition. It is

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[21] The earliest punch-marked coins, which pertain to the area and period under consideration, probably symbolise the development of such exchange networks. The attempts to assign these coins to specific rulers or ruling dynasties have been by and large futile. It is likely that the coinage system(s) may have been devised by early traders to meet the requirements of expanding networks of exchange.

[22] In Buddhist literature likewise, śūdras are described as possessing wealth, including grain, gold, and silver (Chakravarti 1987:99).

also likely, given the context in which such contact occurred, that some forms of exchange may have developed more systematically than others. In other words, these systems were potentially, and often actually, contentious and conflicting. These conflicts can be viewed on at least two levels. On the one hand, there was a continuous conflict regarding the relative importance (often defined or disguised as sanctity) to be assigned to them. While the brahmanical authors attempted to reiterate the importance of dakṣiṇā and dāna as opposed to other activities such as trade and usury, this attempt often ran into difficulties, which were reconciled through the notion of āpaddharma.

At another level, and related to the above, there was an implicit conflict amongst those controlling rival systems of exchange--each apparently attempting to extend its scope in terms of both the resources and the people involved. The growing emphasis on dāna for instance, suggests an attempt on the part of brāhmaṇas to tap resources more effectively than before. At the same time, the constant emphasis on generosity and hospitality as ideal qualities points to the fact that not as many people or as much produce as could be desired were encompassed within the network of dāna.

While the brāhmaṇas' attempts to establish and maintain systems of exchange under their direct control ran into difficulties, the repeated claims of brāhmaṇas to exemption from taxation suggest that these may have been violated in practice. Thus, brāhmaṇas may have been drawn into the network of tribute or taxation, although they claimed to be beyond it.

In other cases, attempts to restrict the participation of people within particular forms of exchange were challenged--production for exchange, for instance, was clearly not confined to vaiśyas,

and was undertaken, legitimately or otherwise, by those who were classified as brāhmaṇas and śūdras as well.

Viewed from the perspective of producers, the growing importance of networks of exchange, whether ritual, political, or economic, and the pressures to participate in them, probably necessitated a reordering of processes and goals of production.[23] Besides, the specific nature and value of the resources produced for exchange would also have varied according to the relative strength of the producers and those dominating or controlling alternative systems of exchange.

We had argued earlier (Chapters II-IV) that participation in and control over exchange networks constituted one of the major bases of political power. From the preceding discussion, it will be evident that such participation and control required, in effect, an ability to cope with a dynamic and complex situation in which it was no longer possible to even attempt to concentrate the entire flow of resources through a single exchange network. In such a situation, the exercise of political power and authority clearly had its limits. Those who aspired to leadership or rulership could not simply claim control over all kinds of produce or resources. Instead, they had to come to terms with those who were assuming control over alternative, often contending systems of exchange. It is within this context that attempts were made to structure access to political power and authority along varṇa lines.

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[23] Some of the implications of this will be explored in the next chapter.

III

The problem of defining or delimiting access to political power acquired, as noted earlier (Chapter II), a new relevance in later Vedic texts. We had seen how the question was posed and occasionally resolved for individual men who aspired to positions of importance. However, as has been evident in the preceding discussion, the success in consolidating power and institutionalising it depended on the extent to which both the access of specific social categories to such power could be restricted, and on the degree to which the support of these categories could be ensured. While a number of the issues involved have been discussed earlier in the context of institutions such as rājya, we will focus here on the attempts to structure access to political power along varṇa lines and assess their significance.

Unlike the problem pertaining to the relative importance of various forms of exchange, the question of power relations in general was worked out through myths (especially later Vedic) and rituals. The attempt to resolve the problem through myths indicates that it was perceived as arising out of an earlier, pre-existing situation rather than as a novel issue. Both the later Vedic myths and rituals, moreover, focus on conflicts amongst social categories which were sought to be resolved by enforcing notions of a hierarchical relationship at a variety of levels.

As we have seen, the legitimate exercise of political power was associated with kṣatra, a term which gradually lost the semantic connotation of universalistic power and was used instead to designate power as exercised by the second varṇa category, the kṣatriya or rājaṅya. Thus, the incumbents of virtually every position of status,

such as the śreṣṭha, adhipati, svarāj, and the rājā, were conceived of as endowed with kṣatra, and, at the same time, they were ideally expected to be kṣatriyas or rājaṅyas.

The distinctive characteristic of the kṣatriya, as emphasised in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently, was his participation in warfare. Attempts were made to ensure the acquisition of both the proper traits and success in this respect through rituals. For instance, the performance of the aśvamedha was expected to produce, amongst other things, an ativyādhi rājaṅya (ŚB 13.3.7.9), i.e., a rājaṅya who excelled in killing.[24] Besides, specific rituals such as the ṛṣabha agniṣṭoma were recommended for the rājā before going to battle (ApŚŚ 22.12.11), presumably to ensure success in the endeavour. A similar emphasis is evident in later prescriptions as well, with the rājā being expected to ensure victory, learn the use of the chariot and the bow and stand firm in battle (GDS 10.12-14). The close connection between the kṣatriya and coercive mechanisms is also evident from incidental references such as that in the Śunaḥśepa legend, where the sacrifice of Rohita was postponed on the ground that a kṣatriya was worthy of being sacrificed only when he was capable of bearing arms (AB 7.33.2), implying the centrality of military prowess in defining a true kṣatriya.

The association of the kṣatriya with the use of mechanisms of physical coercion, and the recognition of this as one of the important bases of political power was accompanied by the denial, explicit or implicit, of the rights of other social categories to the legitimate exercise of similar means of control. This process

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[24] Literally a "rājaṅya who is excellent in killing" (Eggeling 1963e:344-345).

culminated in the recognition of protection as the constant duty of the kṣatriya (GDS 10.7, VDS 3.25), implying that other members of the community lacked the wherewithal to ensure their own protection, and hence were compelled to depend on the kṣatriya. Nevertheless, this was only gradually accomplished.[25]

Given the importance of the brahma and the viś referred to earlier, as well as their access to sources of power, ritual in the case of the former and economic in the case of the latter, it is not surprising that these categories posed a challenge to the consolidati of power by the kṣatriya. Each of these challenges was perceived differently within the brahmanical tradition--while the attempt of brāhmaṇas to assert their supremacy was recognised, that of the viś was denied legitimacy. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this perceptic was not necessarily valid.

The challenge posed by the brāhmaṇas was developed through the control asserted and probably exercised over sacral traditions, and is reflected in both myths and rituals, as well as in later prescriptive literature. The former is perhaps best typified in the conceptualisation of Bṛhaspati or Brahmaṇaspati, "an Indra-ized sacrificial deity" (Deshmukh 1933:293). Bṛhaspati was conceived of endowed with the vajra (RV 1.40.8) and was occasionally referred to as Maghavan (ibid.:2.24.12). Both attributes were typical of Indra (Chapter II). Their extension to a deity who was considered representative of the priesthood suggests a conscious attempt to create a counterpoint to Indra, the deity most commonly associated with the

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[25] At another level, the definition of power in explicitly coercive terms meant a denial of the relatively benevolent possibilities which were associated with the virāj, for instance.

rājañya or kṣatriya.[26] This conceptualisation implied that if the rājañya could claim access to political power through this identification with Indra, so could the priest by identifying with Bṛhaspati.

A similar claim is suggested by the titles used to address the sacrificial priest, the ṛtvik. These included bhūpati, bhuvanapati and mahataḥ bhūtasya pati (BSS 3.23, ApSS 4.4.2), implying mastery or overlordship over the entire earth and its creatures. Nevertheless, the use of such titles was restricted to the sacrifice. As such, although priests may have claimed access to power in the ritual context, they were not in a position to extend this to other spheres as well.

At another level, as we have seen (Chapters I,III,V), myths equating various deities with the brahma and the kṣatra almost invariably defined their relationship in terms of either co-operation between the two, or more commonly, the superiority of the former vis-a-vis the latter. A similar relationship was developed through rituals such as the rājasūya (SB 5.4.4.5) and the aśvamedha (ibid.: 13.1.5.3) as noted earlier. Once again, these suggest an attempt to assert control on the part of the priests, which may not have been very effective in practice.[27]

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[26] As Dandekar (1951:52-53) observes: "A critical study of the Ṛg Vedic hymns which celebrate Brahmaṇaspati would clearly show that that god is obviously a conscious priestly creation...The Vedic poets have consciously set this god by the side of Indra...Sometimes this anxiety to place the magic power of prayer on par with warlike valour seems to have got the better of the Vedic poets. As a result of this, in some passages, Brahmaṇaspati alone is credited by the Vedic poets with having accomplished the heroic deeds which are normally and of course more naturally, attributed to Indra."

[27] In fact, the brāhmaṇa who probably came closest to the actual exercise of political power was the purohita, whose functions have been discussed earlier (Chapter VI).

A tacit recognition of such ineffectuality is provided in the notion of rājya being unsuitable to a brāhmaṇa (SB 5.1.1.12). This feeling evidently persisted, as is indicated by the provision that the brāhmaṇa and the vaiśya could take up arms only in exceptional circumstances, when the very existence of the varṇa-based order was threatened (e.g., VDS 3.24).

The inability of brāhmaṇas to participate directly and routinely in political affairs was thus acknowledged within the brahmanical tradition itself. However, as noted earlier, if the priest could not assert total control over the kṣatra, neither could the latter over the former. Hence, although the boundaries of the respective spheres of influence were probably challenged, the very existence of different spheres was accepted by both sides.

The contest of the brahma and kṣatra vis-a-vis the political sphere was thus within a common framework. In other words, although they were conceived of as rivals or uneasy partners, there was an underlying common definition of the issues at stake, to which both subscribed. As such, the question was more of who was to be victorious rather than what was at stake. Hence, despite tensions, a certain understanding and reconciliation of interests was possible.

The relationship of the kṣatra and the viś was, however, characterised by a conflict of a different kind, where the very definition of the sphere and nature of power and authority appears to have been questioned. This is reflected, for instance, in the conceptualisation of the Maruts, who, along with the Viśvedevas, were commonly regarded as the divine counterparts of the human viś.

The fact that the divine viś was conceived of in terms of a plurality of gods, as opposed to the deities associated with brahma

and kṣatra, who were characterised as individuals, points to a fundamental difference, which is obvious when one turns to their specific characteristics:

> The Maruts are like brothers, among whom none is the eldest or youngest. They are equal in age, are of one mind. They also look alike with their golden mantles, golden helmets and armlets (Dandekar 1951:50).

Thus, while the uniqueness of the other gods was constantly emphasised, it is the sameness of the Maruts which attracts attention. What is also significant is that the Maruts were considered as Indra's companions, assistants, brothers, and were regarded as one of his sources of strength, as noted earlier (Chapter II). In the human context this would indicate that, initially at least, in a relatively undifferentiated socio-political situation, the viś constituted a major source of both political and military support for those who aspired to positions of leadership.

However, as we have seen (Chapter II), there are indications that the kṣatra-viś relationship underwent changes during the later Vedic phase. This is evident, for instance, in the absence of references to the human viś participating in military exploits. Besides, the situation was, as noted earlier, characterised by barely concealed tension, reflected in the fears that the viś would desert the kṣatra, which were conjured away through a range of rituals, and in attempts to enforce a relationship of explicit subordination on

the viś through similar means.[28] As suggested before, it is likely that the viś tried to resist attempts to deprive them of their traditional sources of power, either through actually moving beyond the sphere of influence of the leaders or rulers or through challenging them. Nevertheless, such attempts, though occasionally recognised ritually, met with limited success.

It is significant that in the post-Vedic prescriptive literature, the kṣatra-viś/vaiśya relationship was no longer viewed as problematic. In other words, the challenge posed by the viś, and the alternative, less stratified conceptualisation of political relationships gradually lost force. While this may have been partly owing to the strength of the new rulers and their ability to consolidate their position, it was also probably related to the growing differentiation within and amongst what was defined as the viś, referred to earlier. It was also probably related to the opening up of a range of exchange networks and the consequent economic

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[28] Apart from the rituals referred to earlier, the ideal kṣatra-viś relationship was enforced through the āgrāyaneṣṭi or the offering of the first fruits, where the deities representing the kṣatra received the relatively substantial puroḍāśa or rice cake, while the deities symbolic of the viś received the less prestigious caru or pap (SB 2.4.3.7). A similar equation was developed in the agnicayana where the kṣatra and the viś, represented by Vaiśvānara on the one hand and the Adityas and the Maruts on the other, were created in their "proper" order (ibid.:6.6.1.7, 9.3.1.13), with the former representing the head, while the latter represented the body. In the same context, the main altar was thought to symbolise the kṣatra whereas the other altars represented the viś (ibid.:9.4.3.1-5). Besides, the formulae used while arranging the bricks symbolic of the viś were manipulated to ensure that the former was endowed with vīrya or valour while the viś became disunited through difference of word and thought (ibid.:8.7.2.3, kṣatrāt avīryatarām karoti, pṛthagvādinīm nānācetasām). The inadvertent recognition of the fact that the strength of the viś lay in its unity is significant.

differentiation. In such a situation, the unity and homogeneity of the viś, which constituted the basis of its strength, both political and military, could not be extended to encompass all the people who were coming into or being brought into contact with one another. At the same time, existing bonds amongst people within each community may have been fractured as a result of increasing socio-economic differentiation. Thus, the earlier political relations could not be sustained.

The collapse of the earlier ties did not however mean that the viś was marginalised in political terms. Apart from the implicit dependence of the rulers on the viś for tribute and taxes, the importance of at least some members of the viś was explicitly recognised. These were the grāmaṇis, literally the leaders of the grāma, whose political role has been referred to earlier (Chapter VI).

The importance of the grāmaṇī was in a sense typical of the relationship between the varṇa order and the newly emerging political institutions. While political conflicts were frequently envisaged in varṇa terms, the resolution consisted, partly at least, in strengthening the bonds between the most powerful members of the first three varṇa categories--the purchita and the rājā on the one hand and the rājā and the grāmaṇī on the other, to the exclusion of the rest of those defined as brāhmaṇas, rājaṅyas or kṣatriyas and vaiśyas. Thus, actual access to political power was confined to a handful of men.[29]

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[29] It is significant that during the period under consideration the question of the śūdra acquiring political power is never raised. This would indicate that it was not regarded as an issue of importance.

At the same time, a sense of identity between such men and other, less powerful individuals was fostered through emphasising common varṇa affiliations. This bond probably acquired significance in a situation of socio-political differentiation--from the point of view of those who aspired to or acquired power, whether ritual, political, or economic, the bond provided a basis of social support, while for their less ambitious or less fortunate associates, the tie provided at least indirect access to power.

The development of bonds between men belonging to (or claiming to belong to) a particular varṇa was, however, by no means easy, and probably required systematic efforts. Unfortunately, the details of the means whereby these were effected are not available for most varṇas. The means by which brāhmaṇas attempted to establish their distinct identity are, however, discussed at length, and, in the next section, wewill examine some of these as well as the problems posed by the process.

IV

The social importance of the realm of the sacred has been referred to almost throughout the preceding discussion. We had seen, for instance, how specific social, economic, and political relations were worked out in the ritual context which sanctified and hence legitimated such relationships. Here we will explore how attempts were made to regulate access to and control over the realm of the sacred as a means of consolidating the position of the priestly category and the social implications of the process.

Like the problem of the distribution of political power, the issues relating to the sacred were explored through myths, rituals, and prescriptions. Broadly, the evidence available suggests that the period under consideration witnessed the brahmanisation of the realm of the sacred. This had two related facets--on the one hand, priests or men who performed sacral functions in different communities were probably recognised as brāhmaṇas as opposed to the rest of the community. On the other hand, a range of sacral activities was accorded recognition within the brahmanical tradition.

While the process of brahmanisation enabled the priesthood to consolidate its authority vis-a-vis other social categories and fostered a sense of solidarity amongst those who performed priestly functions, it was not entirely free from difficulties. This is evident from the constant problem posed by alternative definitions of sacred or ritual activities, which was resolved through the virtually unending process of incorporation. Besides, as we shall see, there is evidence for explicit challenges as well.

The process, and the tensions associated with it are evident in the discussion on the origin of the sacrificial cult within the

later Vedic tradition. The sacrifice itself was an institution of undoubted antiquity. Moreover, its centrality and legitimacy were unquestioned. What was debated however, was who had discovered the sacrifice.[30] The answer provided to the question was fairly varied at the level of myths. In one instance, the origin of the sacrifice, in this case the vājapeya, was ascribed to both Bṛhaspati and Indra (SB 5.1.1.11), both of whom were credited with its performance. This was explicitly used to justify the performance of the sacrifice by a brāhmaṇa or a rājaṅya in the human context. Thus the possibility envisaged in this case was one of more or less equal status vis-a-vis the cult as far as the first two varṇas were concerned.

Nevertheless, this was not the only possible resolution. Elsewhere (AB 7.34.1), the issue at stake was posed in terms of the ritual in general, with the brahma and the kṣatra conceived of as pursuing the sacrifice with their respective weapons. Needless to say, the former was supposed to have succeeded, while the latter failed.

Despite such claims, there are indications that the control exercised by brāhmaṇas over the sacrifice was by no means total. This is suggested by the myth of Indra's vajra or thunderbolt (SB 1.2.4.1), which was supposed to have been used to construct the typical basic tools of the sacrifice, the wooden sword and the sacrificial post. This extension of the symbolism of the vajra, viewed in conjunction with the frequent identification of Indra with the typical rājaṅya, suggests that the support of the latter was

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[30] The significance of the sacrifice was also discussed and provided the basis for a wealth of philosophical speculation.

essential for the performance of the cult. As much is evident from the prescription (AB 7.34.2) requiring men of the first three varṇas to ask the kṣatriya to grant them a sacrificial site.

The ambivalent attitude towards the claims of kṣatriyas to the discovery and performance of the sacrifice probably reflects the tension-ridden alliance between the brahma and the kṣatra, examples of which have been noted earlier (e.g., Chapter V). Such ambiguities were absent in the discussion of the relationship of the viś to the sacrifice. This is evident from the changing treatment accorded to the Maruts in early and later Vedic mythology. In the former, the Maruts are referred to as the first performers of the sacrifice (RV 2.34.12), which would suggest an ability to initiate such activities. However, in the later Vedic tradition, the Maruts were specifically characterised as ahutāda (i.e., not deserving to eat or receive oblations, SB 2.5.2.24, 4.5.2.16). If this reflects the position of the human viś vis-a-vis the sacrifice, it would indicate a remarkable shift from a position of control to one of exclusion. It is likely that this shift was related in part to the changing nature of the sacrifice itself, and the use made of the ritual to legitimise socio-political differences. Besides, the exclusion of the viś from the role of defining the ritual may have been one means whereby brāhmaṇas could bolster their claims to status by asserting a near monopoly over definitions of the sacral context.

The treatment of other men who attempted to define the nature of the sacrifice or introduce ritual variations is illustrated by the legends of Kavaṣa Ailuṣa (AB 2.8.1) and Vatsa (PVB 14.6.6). The former was described as a dāsīputra, abrāhmaṇa, and kitava (i.e., the son of a slave woman, a non-brāhmaṇa and a cheat or gambler)

who "proved" his brahmatva (brahmanahood) by "seeing" the aponaptrīya hymn and using it to draw the waters of the Sarasvatī to himself. The latter was condemned as a śūdraputra (the son of a śūdra) till he passed the fire ordeal through the use of the Vatsa sāman, named after him. Thus, the achievements of such men were appropriated, while their social origins were glossed over.[31]

It is evident then that brāhmaṇas attempted to assert their control over definitions of the sacrifice through a variety of means, including myths and legends. Despite such assertions, however, it is likely that the actual performance of any sacrifice probably posed the issue of control far more concretely. Two or probably three, resolutions were possible. On the one hand, the sacrifice could be converted into an esoteric activity, open only to a select social category. While this may have had the advantage of ensuring exclusively brahmanical control over the ritual, it also meant that the social significance of the sacrifice, which derived from the participation of a range of social categories, would have been marginalised. In other words, the very purpose of asserting control over the cult would have been defeated. Hence, although such an exclusive attitude was occasionally adopted (as in the development of the possibility of sattras), it was never systematised.

The second possibility was to assign and enforce distinct social roles for different social categories within the sacrificial context (and by extension, outside it as well). It was this which was most systematically explored within the brahmanical tradition, especially during the later Vedic period.

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[31] Other examples of such appropriation, especially in the context of mystic knowledge, will be noted below.

To start with, the role and nature of the priesthood was explicitly laid down. Priests were expected to perpetuate the sacrificial tradition (SB 1.5.2.7) and were regarded as guardians responsible for spreading and producing the cult (ibid.:1.5.1.12).[32] Their proper qualifications were also emphasised. These included knowledge of the sacred lore, as mentioned earlier, with the learned brāhmaṇa being regarded as the bravest (ibid.:4.6.6.5).[33] At the same time, what was defined as learning and the medium of communicatio was standardised, brāhmaṇas being explicitly forbidden to use mleccha bhāṣā (i.e., speech which was different from Sanskrit, ibid.: 3.2.1.24). Priests were also expected to be endowed with brahmavarcas a less tangible quality, implying divine glory or splendour, pre-eminence in holiness or sacred knowledge, sanctity or superhuman power (SED:s.v.), which could be acquired through a number of sacrifices such as variations in the soma sacrifice (PVB 6.3.5, AB 1.1.5, SB 4.1.1.14), the agnyādheya (SB 2.1.3.6, BSS 2.13), and the agnihotra (SB 2.3.1.31, ApSS 6.6.4). Very often, this was extended to an explicit (e.g., AB 8.40.1, SB 2.2.2.6, 2.4.3.14) or implicit (e.g., BSS 9.19, ADS 2.5.12.6, GDS 9.13, BDS 4.5.5, VDS 12.28-30) claim to divinity.

Emphasis was also laid on proper ancestry, typified by the insistence on appointing ārṣeya brāhmaṇas (i.e. brāhmaṇas who could claim descent from men recognised as ṛṣis or sages) as sacrificial

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[32] Ete vai brāhmaṇāḥ yajñasya pravitāraḥ ye anūcānāḥ, ete hi enam tanvataḥ, ete enam janayanti.

[33] Yaḥ vai brāhmaṇānām anūcānatamaḥ, saḥ eṣām vīryavattamaḥ. In the later Dharma Sūtras, the learned brāhmaṇa was regarded as inherently purifying (GDS 15.28, VDS 3.19). As opposed to this, the ignorant brāhmaṇa was condemned as a brahmabandhu, a so-called brāhmaṇa (CU 6.1.1).

priests. Besides, as noted earlier, references to the gotra and pravara of the sacrificial priest formed a part of virtually every ritual. Occasionally, moreover, as in the case of the dasápeya, proper ancestry was supposed to extend for as many as ten generations. The concern for such genealogies was probably useful in consolidating the bonds amongst priests.[34]

While the role of the priest and the basis on which it could be assumed were thus codified, its implementation required the performance of the sacrifice. Attempts were made to ensure this by prescribing ritual activities as a duty for other social categories, especially the rājaňya and the vaiśya (e.g., SB 2.1.3.9, 3.3.3.10, VDS 2.16,18).[35]

The incorporation of these categories, however, posed certain problems, reflected in the discussion on their status in the ritual context. If such men were inferior to the brāhmaṇas, then their

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[34]The definition of ancestry often meant the exclusion of a range of less legitimate men from sacrificial activities (BSS 2.3). Ideally, the ṛtvik was to be the son of brāhmaṇa parents born after the observance of one of the recognised forms of marriage. He was also expected to be free from physical disabilities (BSS2.3, LSS 1.1.7, ApSS 10.1.1). Occasionally, emphasis was laid on a distinctive life-style as well. This included the eating of food fit for a brāhmaṇa (PVB 17.1.9) and the avoidance of surā or liquor (GDS 23.1, VDS 20.22).

[35]There are indications that the śūdra may have occasionally been treated as a potential yajamāna. This is suggested by the provision for calling the yajamāna during the basic fortnightly sacrifice (ApSS 1.19.9), where variations were introduced depending on whether he was a brāhmaṇa, rājaňya, vaiśya, or śūdra. While the commentator on the text, Dhūrtasvāmin (1955:61) attempted to explain away the reference to the śūdra as an alternative for the niṣāda or sthapati, this is clearly a later interpretation. Elsewhere (BSS 2.12, ApSS 5.3.18), the rathakāra in mentioned instead of the śūdra.

participation in the ritual was a potential hindrance. Yet, if they did not participate in the ritual, it would lose its social relevance. A way out was sought through the provision for temporary brahmanisation--all non-brāhmaṇa yajamānas were to be regarded as brāhmaṇas during the performance of rituals such as the basic soma sacrifice (ApSS 10.11.6) and the aśvamedha (SB 13.4.1.3).[36] As noted earlier, the expedient was, at best, of dubious value, as it conveyed the (possibly unintended) message that the status of the brāhmaṇa was not as exclusive as was portrayed.

At another level, brāhmaṇas attempted to use the ritual context to define their status vis-a-vis other social categories in terms of superiority and inferiority. Such efforts were characteristic of the soma sacrifice and its variants, as well as of major rituals such as the rājasūya and aśvamedha. As we shall see (Section V), they were evident in the rituals prescribed for the household as well.

The most outstanding example of the manipulation of the ritual to establish hierarchical relations was provided by the treatment accorded to the śūdra. The śūdra was explicitly designated as ayajñīya (PVB 6.1.11), i.e., as not fit to participate in the sacrifice. In fact, the yajamāna who was initiated for the soma sacrifice was expected to avoid even talking to a śūdra (SB 3.1.1.10),[37] while the

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[36] This was extended to suggest that the murder of a kṣatriya or a vaiśya who was initiated for a sacrifice was equal to that of a brāhmaṇa (ADS 1.9.24.6).

[37] Occasionally, the provision was extended to the dīkṣita (i.e., the man initiated for a sacrifice) in general (ApSS 15.20.16). In some instances, such as the pravargya, seeing a śūdra was prohibited (ApSS 15.2.9). Conversation with śūdras was also forbidden as part of penances (GDS 26.8, BDS 3.8.22, VDS 24.5). Many of these provisions were applicable against women as well.

milk used for the daily agnihotra could not be milked by the śūdra (BSS 24.31, SSS 2.8.3, ApSS 6.3.12). Where, as in the rājasūya, some śūdras did participate in the ritual, an expiation was prescribed, presumably to undo the "harm" caused by their presence (SB 5.3.2.2-4). Elsewhere, in the soma sacrifice, as noted earlier, and in the odana sava (BSS 18.9), their participation was regulated to convey a message of subordination.[38] This was occasionally extended to the use of the śūdra or the vṛṣala as a scapegoat, as for instance in the mahāvrata (BSS 16.20, LSS 4.3.2) which included a mock battle between a brāhmaṇa and a śūdra or an ārya and a śūdra, which was to culminate in the victory of the former.[39]

As suggested earlier, the use of the sacrifice to enforce social distinctions may have run into problems, as the participation of the social categories essential for the communication of the message of differentiation may not have been forthcoming. In such a situation, an attempt was made to explore alternative definitions of the sacred and/or appropriate existing, non-brahmanical definitions and utilise these to enforce social differences. This is evident in the treatment of ritual or sacred learning, which was increasingly viewed

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[38] In the odana sava, for instance, the use of vessels of gold, silver, bronze and clay were recommended for the brāhmaṇa, rājaṅya, vaiśya and śūdra respectively. An understanding of the relative worth of the varṇas was thus provided graphically.

[39] The role of the śūdra as a scapegoat is also evident in the penance prescribed for the brahmacārin who violated the vow of chastity (ADS 1.9.26.9), where the śūdra had to eat the remains of the offering to Nirṛti, the goddess who was considered particularly inauspicious.

as a substitute for the performance of the ritual.[40]

As in the case of the sacrifice, control over ritual learning rested with the brāhmaṇas, although participation in the learning process was open to the rājañya and the vaiśya (e.g., VDS 2.16,18). If anything, the exclusion of the śūdra was more explicit (e.g., SB 14.1.1.31, ADS 1.3.9.9, GDS 16.19, BDS 1.11.21.17, VDS 18.12), with punishments being prescribed for those who violated the norms (GDS 12.4).[41]

However, the mere extension of the norms or values devised in the context of the sacrifice did not prove sufficient to consolidate the social position of the brāhmaṇas vis-a-vis other social categories. Hence, attempts were made to appropriate alternative definitions of the sacred. Some of these alternatives, such as mystical knowledge, may have emerged from other social categories, in part as a means of challenging the brāhmaṇas' exclusive claims to defining the sacred. This is suggested by the frequent references to rājās instructing brāhmaṇas regarding the subject. For instance, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali (CU 5.3.7) was thought to have taught Gautama, a brāhmaṇa, while Aśvapati, also a rājā (ibid.:5.11.5) imparted sacred learning to five śrotriyas. Nevertheless, this was recognised as pratiloma or contrary

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[40] This notion was elaborated through analogies such as the one which compared speech to the juhu (wooden sacrificial spoon), the mind to the upabhṛt (cup used for sacrifices), the eye to the dhruva (sacrificial vessel) the intellect to the sruc (wooden ladle), truth to to the avabhṛta or the concluding bath, and the attainment of svarga-loka or heaven to the end of the sacrifice (BDS 2.6.11.8). Elsewhere (ibid.:2.6.11.10), the recitation of Vedic texts pertaining to a particular sacrifice by a man who had eaten and was anointed, was considered equal to the performance of the ritual.

[41] If a śūdra listened to the Vedas, his ears could be filled with lac or tin, his tongue could be cut off if he recited it, and his body split in half if he remembered it.

to norms (BAU 2.1.15).[42] Besides, although kṣatriyas may have contributed significantly to the formulation of this tradition, its preservation and perpetuation rested in the hands of the brāhmaṇas.

The process of appropriation was two-fold. On the one hand, knowledge of the ātman or supreme soul was regarded as a definitive attribute of a true brāhmaṇa (BAU 3.8.10), while, on the other, the exponents of such knowledge, including kṣatriyas such as Janaka, were recognised as brāhmaṇas (SB 11.6.2.10). Perhaps the most outstanding example is provided by the case of Satyakāma Jābāla, whose mother was a slave woman and whose father was unknown. The treatment accorded to him within the brahmanical tradition is interesting. On the one hand he was "accepted" as a brāhmaṇa on account of his truthfulness (CU 4.4.5) when questioned about his parentage, this being the means of appropriating the ideas and achievements of "one of the most famous exponents of Upaniṣadic philosophy" (U.C.Sharma 1974:193). On the other hand, he was blacked out from the more popular versions of the brahmanical tradition which were widely disseminated:

> One does not come across any reference to his name in the Epics and Purāṇas, which is not the case with the other personalities mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads (ibid.).

The incorporation of mystic insight within the definition of the sacred in the brahmanical tradition may have been more in the nature of a defensive response to a challenge to the brahmanical monopoly of defining sacrality. This, as well as the reluctant

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42 As Anantalakshmi (1930:114) observes: "Everywhere in the Upaniṣads, brāhmaṇas are the teachers of sacred knowledge and this position is never reversed without exciting comment."

acceptance of asceticism as a possibility in the Dharma Sūtras, were thus conservative steps to preserve brahmanical claims.

At the same time, other means were adopted to actively extend the social scope of brahmanical authority, especially within the household. This was attempted through the emphasis on the pañca-mahāyajñas, the five great sacrifices, which were prescribed for the male householder, and which included the daily feeding of brāhmaṇas (PGS 2.9.11, BDS 2.6.11.5, VDS 11.5) and through the brahmanisation of rites of passage. The latter process was ensured through the insistence on the participation of the right kinds of priests in such rituals, as noted earlier (Chapter VI) and through the explicit incorporation of brahmanical values within such ritual situations. This is especially apparent in the treatment accorded to śūdras. Not only were they denied the right to perform such rituals (VDS 4.3), but they could not participate even indirectly. For instance, the fire used for marriages could not be taken from the house of a śūdra (PGS 1.2.3, KGS 1.5.5) and the food offered by the śūdra had to be avoided by the snātaka who had successfully completed the period of Vedic learning (PGS 2.8.4) as well as during śrāddhas (ADS 2.8.18.2).

Despite attempts to impose a common notion of the sacred by brāhmaṇas, there is evidence that at least some groups or individuals did not accept the relevance of the sacred thus defined. This is suggested by the condemnation of those who violated norms or neglected the performance of such activities. Such men were warned that entire kulas or families could be destroyed through the neglect of the yajña or sacrifice, vivāha or marriage, the Vedas, and brāhmaṇas (BDS 1.5.10.27). More generally, the atheist or nāstika was regarded as a patita (GDS 21.1), i.e., one who had fallen from

the prescribed path.[43] The attempt to define the status of such men, although negatively, points to their existence.

What is as significant is that at least some brāhmaṇas deviated from the prescribed norms as well. The range of violations is striking. Some evidently sacrificed for śūdras (GDS 20.1),[44] others did not perform the soma sacrifice, yet others sold the Vedas instead of imparting them in the approved manner (BDS 1.5.11.34) and destroyed or did not establish the sacred fire (GDS 15.15). In other words, some brāhmaṇas clearly challenged what were regarded as the very basis of brahmanahood.

It is evident then, that the process of consolidating varṇa identity was by no means simple. Such an identity could be challenged if and when other social categories claimed access to identical attributes, such as an ability to "discover" sacrifices. It could also be challenged if alternative definitions of such attributes were devised, as in the case of mystic insight. Thus, while both the acquisition of the attributes regarded as central to the identity in question and its acceptance by others were crucial, neither of these was achieved with any degree of finality.

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[43] Similarly, the man who did not set up the sacrificial fire, the anāhitāgni, and the one who did not perform the agnihotra were regarded as aśuci or impure (BDS 2.1.2.8). Food could not be accepted from a man who had abandoned the worship of the sacred fires (ADS 1.6.18.32). Elsewhere (VDS 1.18), the man who extinguished his sacrificial fires or forgot the Vedas was considered to be guilty of a pātaka, while upapātakas included forsaking the sacred fire, being an atheist, or obtaining livelihood from an atheist, offending a guru or selling soma (ibid.:1.23).

[44] The text provides for the abandonment of such men by their sons.

It is likely that other varṇas may have faced similar, though not identical problems. The definition of the attributes of the ideal or typical leader or ruler, for instance, which we have referred to earlier (Chapters II-V) and the attempt to both arrive at and enforce certain common norms, would have been important for those who were identifying themselves as rājaṅyas or kṣatriyas. And they were, as we have seen, challenged by others. The concerns which united (and divided) the vaiśya are less easy to reconstruct, but their existence can be assumed.

As noted before, the means whereby social categories other than the brāhmaṇa attempted to resolve such issues are unknown. Nevertheless, that such means were devised is indirectly reflected in the problems encountered by the brāhmaṇas in their attempt to develop and enforce uniformity vis-a-vis the sacred. It is also reflected in the range of means devised to legitimate the varṇa-based order as a whole, and specific elements of the hierarchy. We will discuss these, and examine their implications in the next section.

V

The connection between the existence of disputed claims and the need for legitimation has been explored earlier in the context of explicitly political institutions. That such a need was experienced in the context of varṇa points to a certain lack of acceptance of the institution, which was countered through a range of legitimative devices. These attempted to develop a social schema[45] which reiterated a certain understanding of the nature and significance of the varṇa hierarchy at a number of levels. This created a sense of identity amongst men belonging to different varṇas which was necessary to win their allegiance to the institution of varṇa as a whole. At the same time, efforts were made to define and order relationships amongst the varṇas.

The schema which emerged was embedded in rituals and myths, some of which have been referred to earlier. What is significant about both the rituals and myths is that the attempt to use these as vehicles of the ideology of varṇa seem to have been developed in the later Vedic and post-Vedic period. At another level, varṇa was legitimated through abstract theorisation.

Considerable emphasis was laid on the common sacral rights of the members of the first three varṇas. For instance, all three were eligible to perform the agnyādheya or the first installation of the sacrificial fire (SB 2.1.3.5) which marked the formal commencement of the ritual activities prescribed for the male householder. At another level, all could participate in rituals such as the rājasūya (SB 5.4.1.3-5), where, as we have seen, they were regarded as

[45] Kertzer (1988:80) defines social schemas as: "abstract symbolic systems that structure our cognition of the social world. As with all schemas, these are important because they permit tremendous cognitive economy " (italics original).

performing an identical role by offering protection to the yajamāna. This identity was recognised in the goals of sacrifices such as the pravargya (SB 14.2.2.30, BSS 9.11), agniṣṭoma (BSS 7.7), and agnicayana (SB 8.4.2.3-5), during which prayers were offered for the protection of all three categories. Besides, as noted earlier, men of the first three varṇas were regarded as legitimate sacrificers, donors, and students of the sacred lore. This emphasis on a common access to the sacred was probably a means of securing allegiance to the varṇa-based order.

At the same time, some rituals such as the rājasūya (AB 8.36.4) were conceived of as a means of endowing each of the four varṇas with positive but distinct qualities, the brāhmaṇa acquiring tejas or lustre, the kṣatriya vīrya or valour, the vaiśya prajāti or procreative powers, and the śūdra pratiṣṭhā or stability.[46]

This was extended, moreover, to use rituals to differentiate between and amongst varṇas. Examples of this have been noted in the context of the soma sacrifice (Chapter II) and similar variations were incorporated within the agnyādheya, where the season for its performance (BSS 24.16, ApSS 5.3.18, SSS 2.1.1-3), the chants prescribed (ApSS 5.6.3), the metres used (BSS 2.14, ApSS 5.6.2, SSS 14.33.9, 12,15), the deities invoked (BSS 2.16, SSS 2.3.4-7) and the distance between the sacrificial fires (BSS 30.3, ApSS 5.4.3) varied according to varṇa.

While such variations suggested that each varṇa was distinct, other statements made in the sacrificial context focused on the

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[46] The basic agniṣṭoma was also occasionally viewed as a means of endowing the brahma with tejas, the kṣatra with ojas or vigour, and the viś with puṣṭi or nourishment (ApSS 4.6.2).

nature of the differences amongst the varṇas. For instance, the dvādaśāha or twelve-day soma sacrifice was thought to ensure that the kṣatra and the viś would be subservient to the brāhmaṇa (PVB 11.11.8, 15.6.3). Similar statements were incorporated within the rājasūya and the aśvamedha, as noted earlier, and in the agnicayana (SB 6.4.4.12-13), where a horse, goat and ass, representative of the kṣatra, brahma, and the vaiśya and the śūdra respectively, were arranged so that the last-named pair were encompassed by the others and rendered incapable of deserting the higher varṇas. This "correct" order was thought to ensure that there would be no confusion between good and evil.

What is as significant is that attempts were made to recreate the hierarchical order through routine domestic rituals such as the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice (SB 11.2.7.16), where the order in which the offerings were arranged was thought to ensure that the brahma and the kṣatra would be established on the viś. This meant that even when large-scale sacrifices declined in importance, the values embedded in them continued to be reiterated at a different level.

The tendency to incorporate such statements within rituals centring around the household is also evident in the treatment of rites of passage such as the upanayana. While one of the earliest descriptions of the rite (SB 11.5.4.1-18) does not contain any discussion on varṇa (Ram Gopal 1983:295-96), later prescriptions incorporate a range of varṇa-based variations. For instance, as in the case of the agnyādheya, the seasons prescribed for the upanayana varied according to varṇa (ApGS 10.4, ADS 1.1.1.19, BDS 1.2.3.11), as did the age of the boy to be initiated (AGS 1.19.1-7, SGS 2.1.1-8,

ApGS 10.2-3, PGS 2.2.1-3, KGS 2.4.1-6, ADS 1.1.1.19, GDS 1.7, 1.13, BDS 1.2.3.8-10, VDS 11.49-51). Besides, the visible symbols of the initiate's change of status such as his girdle (AGS 1.19.12, SGS 2.1.15-17, PGS 2.5.21-24, ADS 1.1.2.33-37, GDS 1.17, BDS 1.2.3.14, VDS 11.58-60), his upper and lower garment (AGS 1.19.10,11, PGS 2.5.17-19, ADS 1.1.3.1-7, GDS 1.18-23, BDS 1.2.3.15, VDS 11.61-63) and the wooden staff (PGS 2.5.25-28, GDS 1.28, BDS 1.2.3.16, VDS 11.55-58) were supposed to vary according to varṇa. Similar variations were introduced in the metres prescribed (e.g., PGS 2.3.7-9, BDS 1.2.3.12) and in the ritual formula used for the first begging for alms (PGS 2.5.2-4, ADS 1.1.3.28-30, GDS 2.43, BDS 1.2.3.18, VDS 11.68-70). Varṇa-based variations were occasionally introduced into other rites of passage such as the cūḍa-karman or the first cutting of a boy's hair (SGS 1.28.1-4) and marriage (BDS 1.11.20.12), where attempts were made to equate the forms of marriage with the varṇa order.[47] Besides, the periods of impurity following death (GDS 14.1-4) and birth (VDS 4.27-30) were also thought to vary according to varṇa, with the brāhmaṇa being "purified" much more rapidly than others.[48]

The "proper" varṇa hierarchy was also ensured through the ordering of hospitality. For instance, the most prestigious offerings of madhuparka and arghya were restricted to brāhmaṇas such as the ācārya or preceptor and the ṛtvik or sacrificial priest, the rājā,

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[47] The forms of marriage will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

[48] Variations based on varṇa were also incorporated within other non-sacrificial rituals such as the ācamana or the sipping of water for purificatory purposes (BDS 1.5.8.18, VDS 3.31-34). Occasionally, the colour of the ground on which a man could build his house (AGS 2.8.6-8, KGS 4.2.6), as well as his name (PGS 1.17.4) could vary according to varṇa.

and selected kinsmen (ApGS 13.19, PGS 1.3.1, VDS 11.2). Besides, the daily offering of food was also prescribed along varṇa lines, (GDS 5.44, BDS 2.3.5.15, VDS 11.5-6), with food being offered to the brāhmaṇa first, while the śūdra was to be fed last, occasionally after he had performed some work (BDS 2.3.5.14). Such prescriptions sought to extend the notion of varṇa into day-to-day social intercourse.[49]

At another level, attempts were made to legitimate the varṇa hierarchy through the reiteration and development of myths. As noted earlier (Chapter II), not all myths which discussed the origin of social categories conceived of their relationship as hierarchical. In one instance (BAU 1.4.11-14), Brahmā was thought to have created kṣatra, symbolised by Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjaṅya, Yama, Mṛtyu, and Iṣāna amongst the deities in order to strengthen himself. This apparently did not prove adequate. Hence he created the viś with the Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Viśvedevas, and Maruts amongst the deities. As even this was not sufficient, he created the śūdra varṇa and Pūṣan. Ultimately, dharma was created to maintain the entire order. This understanding of the social order focused on the dependence of the higher varṇas on the lower ones. More important, it did not attempt to either disguise the element of dependence or to assert the superiority of the higher varṇas.

However, the range of mythical possibilities was gradually reduced, and what was reiterated most consistently were variations on the Puruṣasūkta (e.g., PVB 6.1.6-11, BDS 1.10.18.2, VDS 4.2) which

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[49] Gestures and words used during salutation were also expected to vary according to varṇa (ADS 1.2.5.16, 1.4.14.25, GDS 6.10,11).

defined the relationship amongst the varṇas in terms of superordination and subordination. Occasionally, moreover, the supposed order and nature of the divine creation was explicitly linked to what were regarded as the ideal attributes of each varṇa. For instance, Brahmā himself was conceived of as endowing the four varṇas with the qualities which would enable them to perform their prescribed functions (BDS 1.10.18.2-5). Thus, the ideal social order was viewed as of divine origin.

Perhaps more significant in the long run were attempts to justify social inequalities in general and the varṇa-based order in particular on the basis of the theory of karma. In one of the earliest of such attempts (CU 5.10.7), the status of a man at birth was accepted and explained in terms of previous actions. As an extension of this, rebirth depended on present or future acts. If these were good, a man was assured of rebirth as a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya or vaiśya, while if these were bad, he would be reborn as a dog, pig, or caṇḍāla. More generally, men were assured of progressing or regressing up and down the varṇa scale according to their conduct in preceding and succeeding births (ADS 2.5.11.10-11, GDS 11.31-32).

The development of the theory of karma marked a certain shift in the focus of explanation or justification. While the earlier myths (including the Puruṣasūkta) and rituals had been concerned with the existence of social categories and their significance, karma implied that the existence of such stratification could be or was taken for granted. What was considered worth explaining was the status of individual men. The offering of an explanation or justification in individualistic terms probably meant that the appeal of the theory could be more direct or immediate, permitting an

identification which may have been less easy to ensure through myths which focused on relatively abstract social categories. It is this which probably explained the long-standing justificatory value of karma.

We had noted earlier (Chapter V) how maintaining some elements of the varṇa hierarchy was recognised as a part of the duty of the rājā (GDS 11.9). This included maintenance of certain ritual norms and the recognition and protection of specific economic and sexual relations. The recognition of such norms as part of rājadharma probably ensured their enforcement as well. This in turn would have led to the consolidation and maintenance of varṇa-based norms.

Despite efforts to enforce the varṇa hierarchy through a range of means, there are indications that it was challenged. This is evident from references to men who did not perform the upanayana (ADS 1.1.2.6, VDS 11.75). Although such men were condemned, their existence would indicate a certain amount of resistance to incorporation within the emerging social order. A degree of hostility is also evident in the characterisation of the typical śūdra (VDS 6.24) as one who bears grudges, is envious, speaks untruths, speaks evil of brāhmaṇas, is back-biting, and cruel. These attributes contrast sharply with the ideal qualities of servitude and suggest that the attempt to structure social relations along varṇa lines may have met with only limited success.

The wide-ranging attempts to establish the legitimacy of the varṇa order and the continued existence of a certain degree of opposition to it suggest that the institutionalisation of socio-political, and probably economic relationships was not a smooth, simple process. Given the fact that there were other attempts to institutionalise

such relationships on other bases such as deśa, kula, and jāti, it is obvious that the social context within which rājya emerged was clearly complex.

Such complexities would have affected the development of rājya in a number of ways. On the one hand, claims to and the consolidation of specific attributes of specific social categories delimited the area within which the rājā could intervene effectively. An example of this is provided by the development of alternative systems of exchange, which meant that it was impossible to channelise the flow of productive resources or produce exclusively through any one system of exchange. As we have seen, this meant that the exercise of political power was shared, for all practical purposes, although this did not mean that all those who wielded power did so in an identical fashion. The differences are obvious if one compares the role of the purohita with that of the grāmaṇī or the rājā, for instance.

At the same time, the growing complexity of the social situation permitted the rājā to consolidate his position to a degree which would probably not have been possible in a less stratified context. As we have seen, the rājā tended to take on a number of social roles which were not intrinsic to the earlier definition of rājya. As important, these roles, associated as they were with a claim to intervene in social conflicts, meant, in effect, that the rājā's social position emerged as a unique, virtually indispensable one, typified in the notion of the rājā as the protector of the social order.

The need for such protection was probably acutely felt by at least some social categories which had acquired access to a certain amount of power, but which, at the same time, were vulnerable to challenges from other social categories and to conflicts amongst their own members regarding the basis on which such power was to be exercised or shared. The discussion on the sacred within the brahmanical tradition, as well as the attempts to legitimate the varṇa-based order exemplify some of these problems and their attempted resolution. As noted above, the evidence indicates that these efforts were not entirely successful. Such a situation permitted the rājā to broaden the range of his influence through the extension or withholding of support to one or other of the contending parties. At the same time, the rājā himself probably emerged stronger by supporting those who were relatively more powerful. In other words, the consolidation of rājya depended on the ability of the rājā to ally himself with what were emerging as the dominant social categories. The alliance between the rājā and these categories was intrinsically linked with fundamental changes within the kinship structure and the organisation of the household. We will explore these in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONTEXT OF RĀJYA (2): TOWARDS GĀRHASTHYA

> (There are four āśramas, those of the) brahmacārin, gṛhastha, bhikṣu, and vaikhānasa. Of them, the gṛhastha is the womb, owing to the unproductiveness of the others.
>
> Gautama Dharma Sūtra.

I

The attempt of the rājā to consolidate his position in relation to the social categories which were emerging, and which have been referred to in the previous chapter, was interwoven with related changes at another level, that of the kinship structure and the household. As in the case of the social changes examined earlier, these were influenced by and in turn influenced specific elements of the definition of rājya. Thus, the developments we will be focusing on reflect a broad similarity with those outlined earlier. As we shall see, there is evidence to indicate that a range of kinship ties and householding patterns, probably specific to different communities, were gradually reduced to a single norm, centring around the gṛha. Simultaneously, relations amongst those living together in the gṛha were structured along hierarchical, patriarchal lines. Moreover, as in the case of varṇa, there are indications that the structuring was by no means a simple, unilineal process, with loose ends, and problems of dissidence or disruption persisting. Here we will explore the political significance of both the process whereby the gṛha was established, as well as of challenges to it, and their implications for the development of rājya.

As will be evident, the implications of the emergence of a specific form of the household to the exclusion or subordination of other patterns were manifold for those who aspired to positions of status. At one level, the development of a single household pattern was useful in political terms as this rendered the exercise of power and control relatively easier, necessitating as it did the formulation of a more or less uniform policy towards all households. This in itself was simpler than evolving distinct policies or norms, which would have been required if different household patterns continued to exist. Given these possibilities, we will explore the range of household types and kinship bonds which were gradually reduced to a single pattern, and analyse the political implications of both the possibilities which were eschewed as well as of that which was ultimately consolidated.

At another level, access to the produce of the household provided possibly the most important source of economic support for the rājā. However, the development of this particular relationship rested both on the ability and the felt need of the householder to produce in order to meet the demands of the rājā and his associates, including the priesthood, and on the creation of mechanisms for siphoning off the produce. While the latter process has been discussed earlier (Chapter VI), we will focus here on the former. We will explore in particular how attempts were made by the male householder or gṛhapati to control both the productive and the reproductive or procreative resources within the household. Further, we will focus on the process whereby this assertion of control was connected with the ability to participate in systems of exchange, economic, political, and ritual, outlined earlier, as well as on the implications of such participation.

We will next focus on the location of the process of socialisation within what emerged as the dominant form of the household. In this context, the issues which were handled as well as the control over the process acquire significance. Given the nature of our sources, it is not surprising that most of the data available on socialisation relate to access to, the control of, and the use of the sacred, including specific forms of sacral activities such as rituals. We will explore this as reflective of the problems and possibilities of socialisation, and focus on the tendency to establish a degree of uniformity in this respect. As we shall see, this permitted the introduction, reiteration, and consolidation of the values and norms which legitimated the emerging political structure amongst other things. Finally, we will examine the nature of the links forged between the householder and those emerging into social, political, and ritual dominance, and the significance of such ties for both participants.

As in earlier instances, the sources available for each of these areas of discussion are fairly distinct. For instance, while the issue of the nature of household units and kinship ties was explored through myth, rituals and prescriptions, as was that of procreation, other problems, such as that of the control and distribution of household produce and the development of the household as the locus of a particular form of socialisation were developed much more systematically through rituals. As we have argued earlier, it is likely that the differences in sources reflect developments over time, with relatively novel issues being handled through rituals, whereas those which were perceived as emerging from a pre-existing situation were discussed in myths. We will use the variations in sources to explore developments within each of the themes outlined above.

We had suggested (Section I) that various forms of household organisation[1] and kinship bonds[2] for which we have evidence during the period under consideration, were politically significant, with some forms being more amenable to the consolidation of political power than others. It is in this context that we will explore the existence of a range of possibilities, and attempts to replace them by a single pattern.

It is likely that the variety of possibilities reflected in t early Vedic tradition was related in part to the existence of dist communities, with a particular form of organsiation being predomin in each. With the growing interaction amongst these communities, and given the context of such interaction, controlled as it was by those who were consolidating access to economic, political, and ritual bases of power, it is not surprising that many of the earli or alternative possibilities were often tacitly, and occasionally explicitly, abandoned, while others were reinforced and reiterated whenever possible.

The early Vedic tradition is remarkable for the wealth of te used to designate the basic household unit. These included the durona (RV 3.1.18), kṣiti (ibid.:5.37.4), okas (ibid.:8.33.2), kṣa (ibid.:9.9.2), nivesá (ibid.:9.69.7), dam or dama (ibid.:2.1.2),

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[1] In most known societies, the household unites the core of t kin group who share a common residence, which often provides the locale for certain crucial activities. However, not all members o the unit necessarily participate in these activities in an identic fashion.

[2] "Kinship indicates a social relationship--fictive, blood or both" (Gailey 1987:x).

pastya (ibid.:4.1.11), asta (ibid.:10.95.2), gaya (ibid.:5.10.3), sadas (ibid.:5.107.7), and grha (ibid.:3.53.6).

While the exact terminological significance of each of these words is difficult to determine, the very existence of a range of terms is probably indicative of a variety of forms of household organisation. This is corroborated when one examines the possible derivations of some of the terms mentioned above. For instance, ksiti or ksaya[3] was derived from the root ksi meaning to dwell, rule or destroy (Upadhyay 1967:46), dam or dama probably originated from the Indo-European root dem meaning to build (IED:s.v.) or from the root dam meaning to control (Basu 1925:111-112), gaya referred to both the household and its contents, including wealth (SED:s.v., VI:s.v.), the durona was probably a house distinguished by a gateway (Sarkar 1985:4), while the pastya may have provided accommodation to humans and beasts (ibid.:6).

What is also noteworthy is that the term grha which later becomes synonymous with the house or household, is but one amongst a number of others used in the Rg Veda. In fact, of the ninety-two occurrences of the various forms of the word grha in the text, only thirty-four occur in the relatively earlier "family books" (R.S. Sharma 1983a:55). While this has been used to argue that family life was not important in early Vedic society (ibid.), we would suggest that it is the relative unimportance of the grha in particular which is indicated, and that family life may have been structured in and around other forms of the household.

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[3]The latter word occurs over seventy-two times in the Rg Veda and has the meaning of house or dwelling (Upadhyay 1967:46).

Another feature of significance is that some of the terms referred to above underwent a dramatic semantic transformation in the later Vedic and post-Vedic tradition. For instance, the word kṣaya acquires the meaning of destruction, whereas asta was used in the sense of setting (of the sun, for example), while earlier connotations of a dwelling place were used relatively rarely. It is likely that this points to a lack of familiarity with certain earlier patterns of household organisation, which may have graduall succumbed to the process of socio-political change.

Initially, however, at least some of these units were regarde as more or less equivalent. This is evident from the conceptualisa tion of the abodes of deities, which include the kṣaya (RV 3.2.6), dama (ibid.:3.10.2, 10.167.4), and pastya (ibid.:4.55.3).[4]

The notion of more or less similar units was also reiterated in prayers in the early Vedic tradition, which focused on either obtaining or ensuring the protection of a range of household units including the kṣiti (RV 8.84.6), kṣaya (ibid.:2.11.14), okas (ibid. 7.56.24), dama (ibid.:2.1.7), gaya (ibid.:10.66.3), and the duroṇa (ibid.:10.120.7).

At another level, the beginnings of the notion of controllin such units are discernible. This is reflected in the use of the suffix pati, the significance of which has been referred to earlie (Chapter III). This was used to form epithets such as dampati and grhapati, which were occasionally used for deities. Of these, the former was relatively rare; the latter, on the other hand, was a

[4]The kṣaya was conceived of as Agni's dwelling place, while and Varuṇa were thought to reside in the dama, Aditi was described as pastyā, i.e., possessing or residing in a pastya.

typical epithet of Agni in the Rg Veda (Griswold 1971:154) and continued to be applied to him throughout the brahmanical tradition (e.g., AB 1.3.5, SSS 1.15.2, ApSS 6.13.2).[5] Besides, it was occasionally extended to deities such as Indra (SB 3.4.2.15) and Prajāpati (PVB 10.3.6) in the later brahmanical tradition.[6]

As significant was the growing emphasis on the position of the human grhapati who was often equated with his divine counterparts (e.g., SB 3.4.2.15) and whose association with and control over the grha was reiterated through the daily agnihotra (BSS 3.8) and the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice (ApSS 1.10.3). There is thus evidence for a two-fold development--one, a tendency to define household relations in terms of control, and second, the location of such relations within the grha, to the virtual exclusion of other types of household organisation.

The working out of these relationships of control involved the transformation of kinship ties between men and women on the one hand and amongst men on the other. This had a number of dimensions--for instance, variations in sexual relations which probably reflected the practices of different communities or social categories were gradually ordered hierarchically, with the ideal pati-patnī

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[5] One of the few goddesses referred to as a grhapatnī was Sūryā (RV 10.85.26). However, by and large, this epithet was rather unusual for both goddesses and women.

[6] The absence of the use of the epithet for the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, is striking. This would indicate that the early rājā was less closely associated with the control of this particular form of the household. However, the human rājā in the later Vedic period and subsequently, was closely connected with the concerns of the grha. For details, see Section V below.

relationship being developed at length,[7] kinswomen other than the wife were accorded marginal importance, and while inter-generational ties amongst men were recognised, intra-generational ties were thrust into the background.

To start with heterosexual relations, early Vedic mythology, including incidental references, throws light on a range of possibilities which diverge significantly from what later emerged as the ideal pati-patnī relationship. For instance, divine heterosexual pairs such as Dyaus and Pṛthivī, the heaven and earth respectively, were conceived of as mothers, or father and mother (e.g., RV 3.1.7, 5.43.2), but not explicitly as pati and patnī or jāyā. In other words, their relationship was not envisaged in terms of what later emerged as the only legitimate definition of heterosexual relationships. Other possibilities envisaged included incestuous relationships, such as that between Pūṣan and his mother (ibid.: 6.55.5) and Prajāpati and Uṣas (ibid.:5.42.13). What is noteworthy is that apart from the first union referred to above, the others were not explicitly recognised as permanent or procreative.

If such conceptualisations point to parallels in the human context, they would suggest that temporary heterosexual unions, not necessarily procreative, were envisaged as both possible and acceptable. The existence of such unions is also reflected in analogies which compare deities and their invokers to the lover and beloved. For instance, a chanter invoking Indra was compared to a marya (young man) thinking about his yoṣā or woman (RV 4.20.5). Elsewhere

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[7] Here we will focus primarily on the status of such men and women vis-a-vis one another, exploring the content of such relationships in subsequent sections.

(ibid.:3.62.8), Indra was compared to the vadhūyu (a wooer, suitor, or bridegroom, SED:s.v.), while the invoker was regarded as the woman or yoṣaṇā. Similarly, Soma was described as coming to men like a jāra or lover to his yoṣā (ibid.:9.38.4).[8]

Perhaps as significant was the relatively egalitarian roles envisaged for men and women in such unions. This is evident from the analogy comparing the fingers pressing soma to a kanyā or maiden greeting her jāra (RV 9.56.3). Elsewhere (ibid.:10.40.2), the invokers attempting to attract the Aśvins were compared to a yosā attracting a marya. In other words, such unions could evidently be initiated by interested individuals of both sexes.

While it is unclear whether the unions referred to above existed within the context of a household, there are indications that somewhat similar bonds, such as that between the dampatī (dual) were forged in such a context. The dampatī referred to the husband and wife (R.S.Sharma 1983a:28) who jointly shared control of the dama. Their ideal relationship, moreover, was reflected in prayers to make the dampatī of one mind (samanasā, RV 5.3.2, 8.31.5).[9] In other words, the emphasis was on equality or consensus rather than on dominance and subservience between partners. What is also significant and probably related to the relatively egalitarian bond between the dampatī was that both sons and daughters (putras and kumārīs) were desired within the dama (RV 8.31.8).

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[8] Terms such as marya, jāra, vara, vadhūyu, etc. could be used to denote either the lover or the bridegroom (Aarve 1939:118).

[9] Pururavas likewise was conceived of as pleading to ensure that the samanasā dampatī should not be divided (RV 10.95.12).

The possibilities referred to above were not, however, accorded recognition within the later brahmanical tradition. While none of these was explicitly condemned, the treatment accorded to the relationship of jāmitva is probably indicative of the attitude towards such unions. Jāmitva implied a close bond, which was evidently viewed as desirable, reflected, for instance, in the prayer to attain jāmitva with the Maruts (RV 10.64.13). It also stood for the brother-sister tie and may have included an obligation to marry (Karve 1939: 109). However, in the later Vedic period and subsequently, the relationship was viewed with increasing disfavour.

Conflicting notions of jāmitva, reflecting a situation of transition, are typified in the famous dialogue between Yama and Yamī (RV 10.10), the primeval twins, who were conceived of as attempting to justify their contradictory aspirations by appealing to the same concept. Thus Yamī was conceived of as desiring sexual union on the basis of jāmitva, whereas Yama was thought to deny the possibility, on the ground of their similarity and virtual identity. While this has been viewed as a discussion on and condemnation of incest, it is possible that the union was regarded with increasing disfavour on account of the absolute equality of the partners. This is also suggested by the treatment of jāmitva in the later Vedic ritual context, where it no longer symbolised positive aspirations. Instead, constant efforts were made to avoid pairing similar objects or verses or metres (e.g., LSS 6.9.8), such unions being regarded as unproductive on account of the sameness of the partners. At another level, some of the terms referred to above, such as jāra, were later regarded as terms of abuse (Karve 1939:119).

At the same time, heterosexual relationships were increasingly structured in terms of the pati-patnī/jāyā bond. While the contents of this relationship will be explored subsequently, it presented a contrast to those referred to above in being construed in terms of superordination and subordination. This is suggested, for instance, by the analogy between the fingers used to press soma, which were thought to serve Indra just as patnīs served a pati (RV 1.62.11).

It is evident then that of a range of prevalent heterosexual unions, a particular form was privileged at the expense of others. What is significant is that the chosen form was one which was hierarchically ordered, in which the initiative was thought to rest clearly and legitimately with the man, as opposed to others, which probably explored possibilities of more or less egalitarian relationships. As suggested earlier, the privileging of the pati-patnī bond was probably owing to the fact that it permitted the consolidation of the ritual and political power within the household in the hands of a single man, the grhapati.

The political significance of the pati-patnī relationship as an ideal or a norm cannot be overestimated. It introduced and standardised values of dominance and subordination within the household, and, as such, contributed significantly to the acceptance of relationships based on identical attributes in other socio-political spheres. At another level, it permitted the consolidation of power in the hands of a single individual within the household. This, in a sense, facilitated the task of those who were attempting to penetrate within and control some aspects of domestic life, priests and men who aspired to positions of status, as they could

negotiate with a single powerful man instead of with a less closely structured and hence probably less "manageable" domestic unit. As such, the pati-patnī relationship was accorded a recognition which was not available to other types of unions. From the perspective of the pati too, it is likely that the development and maintenance of inegalitarian relationships within the household may have posed problems. In such a situation, the possibility of buttressing his position through external support probably assumed greater importance, providing the basis for an intermeshing of various networks of power and authority.

The working out of the pati-patnī relationship was accompanied by the marginalisation of other, non-sexual relations between men and women. This is evident, for instance, in the case of mothers. On the mythical plane, while a number of goddesses such as the Āpaḥ (RV 1.23.16), Aditi (ibid.:1.89.10), the Heaven and Earth (ibid. 3.1.7), Night and Day (ibid.:1.142.7), Uṣas (ibid.:7.81.4), and divinised rivers such as the Vipāśā, Śutudrī (ibid.:3.33.3), and Sarasvatī (ibid.:2.41.6) were characterised as mothers in the early Vedic tradition, this relationship was not explored or reinforced through either myths or rituals.

The treatment of the brother-sister bond was somewhat similar. While some goddesses such as the Āpaḥ (RV 9.82.3), Uṣas (ibid.: 1.123.5), and Sinīvālī (ibid.:2.32.6) were conceived of as sisters of the gods, men rarely appealed to them as sisters.

On the human plane , the shift in the terminology used to designate the sister reflects a transformation of the bond. It is likely that initially, the brother-sister bond was especially close, with the brother or bhrātr being defined in relation to the sister

or svasṛ (Shastri 1949:260). The first term was probably derived from the Indo-European root bhar or bher, meaning to bear, protect or support (IED:s.v.), whereas svasṛ is traceable to the root seve and was in all likelihood related to the Sanskrit root sva or self or svīya, one's own (Ghurye 1962:26). Thus, "the brother appears as the supporter or helper of his sister and the sister figures as his own relative par excellence" (ibid.).

In the later Vedic tradition and subsequently, however, the term svasṛ was replaced by bhaginī. The latter term is commonly explained as one who is fortunate in having a brother, but it also means one who has a vagina (bhaga) (Gonda 197511:431), emphasising the sexual attributes of the woman which at once rendered her attractive and dangerous from the point of view of the brother in an exogamous system and constituted her value in a system of exchange of women by men in such a situation.[10] It was probably this understanding which is reflected in the growing hostility towards the daughter as well (AB 7.33.1).

It is evident then that the structuring of ties between kinsmen and women in the context of gārhasthya meant, in the first place, an ordering of sexual and procreative bonds, with a marked preference for such forms as were male-dominated. Related to the above, kinswomen who could not be incorporated within such bonds were marginalised. In other words, the relationship between kinsmen and women was becoming increasingly differentiated, with the former attempting to assume control over and directing the form and

[10]This will be explored further in the next section, where we will focus on the structuring and control of the procreative powers of women.

content of the relationship. While some of the political implications of the process have been referred to above, its economic consequences, in terms of control over procreative precesses, were also significant.

If the relations between men and women were increasingly governed by concerns of control over procreation, those between men were structured around the issue of control over other resources as well. As mentioned earlier, the development of relationships amongst kinsmen was characterised by the strengthening of inter-generational bonds amongst men, typified by the father-son bond in particular. On the mythical plane, this was reflected in the conceptualisation of the most important deities as fathers. These included Indra (RV 4.17.17) and Agni (ibid.:6.1.5).[11]

Analogies indicate that the father was expected to offer protection (SGS 1.25.7) and impart wisdom (RV 7.32.26), being obeyed in return (ibid.:1.68.5). Besides, although the father-son bond was not one of equality, it implied reciprocity.[12] Thus, the son was expected to support and strengthen the father (RV 1.30.1)

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[11] Other deities occasionally mentioned as fathers include the Maruts (RV 1.38.1), the Aśvins (ibid.:10.39.1), Rudra (ibid.:2.33.12) Soma (ibid.:8.48.4), and Bṛhaspati (ibid.:2.26.3). The conceptualisation of deities as sons was less frequent. Examples include Soma (ibid.:9.110.10), Agni (ibid.:8.23.25), and the Aśvins (ibid.: 10.106.4).

[12] As an extension of this, the father-son tie was often conceived of as reversible, both in myths such as that of Agni and the sacrificer (RV 5.3.10) where the former was thought to be produced by the latter and in turn produced him, and in rituals such as the rājasūya, as noted earlier. This conceptualisation of the relationship conveyed a sense of continuity from one generation to the next.

just as the father supported him.[13]

As in the case of the pati-patnī relationship, the father-son bond was worked out and strengthened through myths and rituals. Perhaps the most significant were those which emphasised the importance of the pitṛs. While the details of the rituals associated with the pitṛs will be discussed below (Section IV), it is significant that the notion of the pitṛs was one which was developed and elaborated during the period under consideration. Thus, of the forty-eight occurrences of the term in the Ṛg Veda, as many as twenty-four are found in the relatively late tenth maṇḍala (Chakravarti 1969:159). Besides, while the term may have initially denoted ancestors in general, it was gradually refined to specify the pitṛ, pitāmaha, and prapitāmaha (father, patrilineal grandfather, and great-grandfather respectively, Karve 1938:74).

As opposed to inter-generational ties, the bonds amongst other kinsfolk were accorded less importance in some instances, and positively denied in others. The bonds which were regarded as unimportant included matrilateral ties amongst sanābhas and sodaryas (GDS 28.26), i.e., those sharing a common navel and womb respectively. The position of the jñāti, literally those who were well-known (Karve 1939:144) was somewhat similar. It is likely that ties with the jñāti were particularly important for women, hence, during the

[13] There are indications that the relationship of support and dependence was associated with the absence of authoritarian control exercised by the father. This is suggested by the myth of Prajāpati and his sons, referred to earlier (Chapter II), where Prajāpati was conceived of as agreeing to do the bidding of his sons saying tatheti (so be it), whereas his sons, when asked to do as he says, were thought to enquire, kim asmākam tat(bhaviṣyati, what will we gain from it, this being explicitly equated with the human situation.

varuṇapraghāsa they were threatened with the destruction of the jñātis in case they had lovers and did not tell the truth (e.g., BSS 5.7).[14] The marginalisation of such ties was reflected in the virtual absence of attempts to identify deities as sanābhas, sodaryas or jñātis as well as in the absence of rituals or prescriptions to strengthen the bonds amongst them.

The fate of the bonds amongst other kinsfolk was more or less similar. These included the bandhus, a term derived from the root bandh, meaning to bind (Karve 1939:142) and probably referring to both uterine and marital as well as paternal kinsfolk, the āpis, literally those who were near (ibid.:144) and the sajātas, i.e., those who shared a common birth. While gods were occasionally identified in terms of such relationships (RV 8.21.4, 8.73.12), these associations were not developed further. In fact, as we shall see, (Section IV), such kinsfolk were often assigned less prestigious roles within the ritual context on occasions such as the rājasūya.[15]

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[14]The association of jñātis with women is also suggested during the marriage ritual (SGS 1.9.9) which included a prayer to Pūṣan to ensure that the bridegroom became jñātimat, i.e., possessed of jñātis, through the father, mother, and brothers of his bride. Women also probably had some claims to the wealth of the jñāti, which was later denied (ADS 2.6.14.9-10).

[15]The treatment of sakhya, friendship or companionship, was somewhat similar. Deities were frequently conceived of in terms of sakhya in the early Vedic tradition (e.g., RV 9.31.6, 10.6.2.etc.). The relationship amongst sakhās of the opposite sex could extend beyond friendship. This is evident from the Yama-Yamī dialogue (ibid.:10.10.1) where the latter was portrayed as hoping to obtain a grandson for her father through sakhya with her sakhā, Yama. Even in the marriage ritual, the seventh step of the saptapadī was to be taken for sakhya (Patyal 1975:107). However, sakhya did not attain centrality within the brahmanical tradition.

The treatment of such kinsfolk extended to the relationship envisaged amongst brothers. What is significant is that although gods were occasionally identified as brothers (e.g., RV 6.59.2, 2.1.9 etc.), no attempts were made to strengthen such ties through rituals. Besides, kinsmen belonging to the same generation as the yajamāna/gṛhapati, the bhrātṛvya and the sapatna, were viewed as positively hostile. We had seen earlier (Chapter II) how such hostility was envisaged in terms of control over material and ritual resources.

The political and economic implications of reinforcing patriliny to the exclusion of intra-generational bonds have been referred to earlier (Chapter II). To recapitulate briefly, the focus on patriliny permitted the concentration of power and resources by restricting potential contenders and claimants, as sons could look forward to gaining their father's positions. As opposed to this, close bonding amongst men of the same generation could be maintained through a sharing of resources and power, and, as such, was considered less valuable. Besides, just as those who were aspiring to establish gender stratification were assured of support, so also, those who aspired to enforce patrilineal control both required and received political and ritual support, for similar reasons.

At the same time, although ties amongst kinsfolk belonging to the same generation were not reinforced, many of these were allowed to persist. This points to the continued importance of bilateral ties, typical of a clan organisation. It has been suggested that although contradictory, clan and lineage-type bonds frequently co-exist owing to the fact that while:

> the latter may serve as instruments of ranking and stratification tending to produce a society of potentially hostile socio-economic class segments..the clan may operate to cross cut class lines, thus discouraging incipient class conflict

(Fried 1967:126). In other words, their continued existence permitted the regulation of open conflicts and as such was politically beneficial.

It is evident then that as relatively independent communities were brought into contact with one another, their kinship structures and household organisations underwent a number of changes. On the one hand, a broad range of alternative, and occasionally contradictory possibilities were gradually undermined. For instance, variations in sexual unions were gradually restricted, with emphasis being laid on a particular form of union to the virtual exclusion of others. At another level, non-sexual (and by extension non-procreative) ties between men and women were marginalised. As we shall see (Section III), this was closely linked to the development of the notion of kinswomen as resources or instruments of procreation. The control of resources in general was, moreover, increasingly oriented along inter-generational lines, to the exclusion of a range of intra-generational ties. Ultimately, hierarchically ordered kinship ties, centring in and around the grha, emerged as dominant.

As noted earlier, the grha itself was not a new creation--it was one of many possible forms of household organisation. Its emergence as virtually the sole form of legitimate householding was probably related to its potential usefulness in terms of the developing political and ritual institutions referred to earlier. The fact that kinship ties within the grha were hierarchically

organised between husband and wife and father and son permitted, as suggested earlier, the acceptance and legitimation of notions of superordination and subordination which were intrinsic to the socio-political order which was emerging. Besides, the grha, thus organised, provided the locus for consolidating and generating resources which provided support to the new order. We will focus on this dimension of gārhasthya in the next section.

III

The consolidation of the particular household order and kinship structure dominated by the grhapati was manifested concretely in his assertion of control over the productive resources and produce associated with the household, as well as with their distribution. This was achieved through the development of relationships of control within the household, which were reinforced through connections with and the support of the new extra-domestic sources of power and authority which were being consolidated virtually simultanesously.

The crystallisation of these relationships took place in the context of what may be broadly defined as a situation of economic expansion, referred to earlier (Chapter I), characterised by the growing importance of settled agriculture, which was probably intrinsically linked to an increase in population.

It has been suggested (Stanley 1981:301, Ember 1983:292) that the shift to settled agriculture results in a dramatic increase in population owing to more certain food supplies, the greater fertility of women, and the demand for labour. This increase in population in turn generates further resources for agricultural expansion. What is as important is that, in situations where relatively simple agricultural technology is employed, labour is possibly one of the most important means of production (Meillassoux 1978:333). Given the limited use of iron tools for agriculture mentioned earlier (Chapter I), it is not surprising that control over procreative processes, which could generate additional labour resources, acquired significance during the area and period under consideration.

The control of procreation necessitated, in concrete terms, the control of women.[16] This was attempted through the reduction and specification of the roles open to them vis-a-vis material resources on the one hand, and through efforts to enforce a definition of procreation which viewed women as merely instrumental in the process. At another level, the possibilities denied to women were extended to others. These included access to and control over material resources, typified by an ability to legitimately transfer them on a range of occasions. We will explore these inter-related developments and their significance.

The issue of control over material resources was explored in early Vedic mythology, examples of which have been noted earlier, with reference to deities such as Indra, Agni, Varuna and Soma (Chapters II-IV). Here, as we had seen, a variety of possibilities were envisaged, ranging from control over resources (e.g., Indra) to identification with wealth and its distribution (e.g., Soma). As we have argued earlier, the variations were probably related to the ideals and practices of different communities. What is significant for the present is that of this entire range of possibilities, those associated with Indra and Agni were extended systematically to the realm of the household through the identification of the grhapati/

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[16] As Gailey (1987:x-xi) observes: "Women symbolise the ability of kin communities to control their own reproduction. In their dual capacity, as both producers of subsistence goods and reproducers of kinspeople, women become the focus of attempts to reduce their relative authority and autonomy," in a situation of state formation, where, from the point of view of those aspiring to state control, there is a need to ensure production to facilitate the collection of tribute or taxes as opposed to production for subsistence, which is the common goal of kin-based societies.

yajamāna with these deities. The possibilities which were thus reinforced were those which focused on the control over resources by a single man, and their conditional distribution.[17]

If the economic role envisaged for the grhapati meant eschewing a number of alternative possibilities which had hitherto been open to men, including the relatively unconditional distribution of resources or produce, typified by Soma, it also necessitated restricting the roles and possibilities open to women. This is reflected in the sharp dichotomy between the roles conceived for goddesses in the early Vedic tradition and that envisaged for women in the later Vedic context and subsequently.

Some aspects of the conceptualisation of the link between goddesses and material resources are especially significant. On the one hand, they were conceived of as generating resources. For instance, goddesses such as Uṣas (RV 4.52.3) and Ilā (ibid.:5.41.19) were regarded as mothers of cattle or the herd. At another level, they were identified with such resources, with Sarasvatī being visualised as being full of milk and water (ibid.:7.36.6), while Pṛṣṇi or the mother of the Maruts was equated with the cow (ibid.: 8.94.1). Besides, like the gods, they were conceived of as distributing resources as well, with Uṣas being commonly described as maghonī or generous[18] (ibid.:3.61.1) and being invoked by those

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[17]The crucial role of the grhapati in productive processes, related to his control over the means of production, is also attested to in Buddhist sources (Chakravarti 1987).

[18]This is the feminine form of maghavan, Indra's characteristic epithet.

who desired rayi or wealth (ibid.:4.51.10),[19] Sarasvatī was characterised as a giver of ratnas or jewels (ibid.:1.164.49), the waters or Āpaḥ were conceived of as conferring the rasa or essence (ibid.:10.9.2), while the oṣadhis or plants were thought to provide horses, cattle, and cloth (ibid.:10.97.4).[20]

If the attributes associated with the goddesses reflect parallels envisaged in the human context, it is evident that the possibility of women generating and distributing produce or productive resources was recognised at least amongst some communities. However, unlike the role envisaged for the grhapati, this possibility was not legitimised or reinforced through rituals or prescriptions. More important, myths and rituals developed the notion of legitimately dispossessing goddesses, and, by explicit extension, women. We had referred earlier (Chapter II) to the battle between Indra and Uṣas as well as to the structuring of gender relations on both the divine and the human plane through the soma sacrifice, which justified debarring women from an inheritance. Such possibilities were also explored in the conceptualisation of the nakṣatras or asterisms which were initially conceived of as possessing ṛddhi or prosperity (PVB 23.23.2), but were later defined as literally nakṣatra (i.e., devoid of kṣatra, SB 2.1.2.18).[21] In other words,

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[19] She was also envisaged as being endowed with both horses and cattle (aśvavatī and gomatī, RV 1.48.2), prayers being offered to her by those who wanted these.

[20] Such associations of goddesses with prosperity and sharing it figure occasionally in the later brahmanical tradition as well. As noted earlier (Chapter II), Sītā was regarded as Indra's wife and the embodiment of prosperity.

[21] At another level, while prayers were offered to the pitṛs or male patrilineal ancestors, to obtain wealth (e.g., RV 10.15.11), the mātṛs or maternal ancestors were never similarly invoked.

the importance of goddesses was negated to exclude (kins) women from what was defined as the resource of the household.

In fact, in the human context, women were increasingly defined as part of the resources of the household, typified in the gifting of women in general and daughters in particular, especially in marriage. This was recognised as a possibility in both the early and the later Vedic tradition. In the former, the gifting of women is referred to as the giving of vadhus, a term commonly used for the bride (RV 6.27.8,8.19.36).[22] Later Vedic tradition records the gifting of daughters by rājās as a means of winning over sages (SB 4.1.5.7, CU 4.2.5). More generally, the gifting of daughters was prescribed in the context of the soma sacrifice (ASS 5.13.17) and in marriage (ADS 2.5.11.17,19, VDS 29.18). Besides, women were enumerated among items of property, including animals and land (GDS 12.36, VDS 3.16) and consequently considered dependent throughout their lives (BDS 2.2.3.46, VDS 5.3).

The recognition of women as subhuman resources which were useful in procreation was accompanied by the conceptualisation of heterosexual intercourse as an occasion for establishing relationships of dominance and subordination (BAU 6.4.2), with provisions for cajoling and coercing the woman through purchase or the use of force (ibid.:6.4.8).[23] At another level, the procreative process was elaborated almost

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[22]The term vadhu was probably derived from the root vah, meaning to carry (VI:s.v.), emphasising the fact that the bride was carried away from her father's house to her husband's (Karve 1939: 123).

[23]Assertion of male control is also evident from the fact that men were expected to use chants and take the initiative in sexual intercourse (ibid.:6.4.20.21).

endlessly, reflected, for instance, in the variety of sacrifices ranging from the daily agnihotra (e.g., SB 2.2.4.7, BSS 3.7, SSS 2.14.2) prescribed for the average householder[24] to more elaborate rituals such as the vājapeya, aśvamedha, and rājasūya, which were prescribed as a means of obtaining progeny in general and sons in particular.[25]

The use of the sacrifice as a procreative device had a number of implications. In the first place, it reinforced the claims of the male yajamāna, who was recognised as prajākāma (i.e., desirous of obtaining prajā or progeny). This contrasted with early Vedic prayers which usually desired offspring for an undifferentiated "us" (e.g., RV 4.50.6, 4.36.9) or for the household unit such as the kṣaya (ibid.:9.97.6) or the gṛha (ibid.:8.31.4). The assertion of the claims of the yajamāna over reproduction was probably two-fold--on the one hand it was an assertion of the authority of men as opposed to women in this sphere, and on the other, it suggests a tendency to recognise individual men as dominant within the household, as opposed to the more generalised forms of control which probably prevailed earlier.

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[24] Other rituals prescribed for acquiring prajā included the new and full moon sacrifice and its variants (SB 1.2.2.3, BSS 1.12, ASS 1.3.28, ApSS 3.15.8, SSS 4.9.2), including the domestic version of the ritual (AGS 1.10.12, PGS 1.12.4, KGS 2.1.5). Besides, the agnyādheya or the initial setting up of the sacrificial fire was also thought to be conducive to the production of prajā (SB 11.1.1.7, ASS 2.3.27, SSS 2.13.4, ApSS 5.8.8). The obtaining of prajā was also sought to be ensured through a range of saṁskāras referred to below.

[25] The prescriptions for obtaining daughters were few and far between, one such prescription occurring as an alternative in the context of the atirātra (BSS 17.13). Similarly, the long list of the types of offspring in the BAU includes only one reference to a daughter (BAU 6.4.17). Occasionally, moreover, the term prajā was viewed as a synonym for putra (ApSS 5.26.3).

Secondly, the devices employed in the ritual to ensure procreation included variations on the mithuna, conceived of as masculine or feminine objects or ideas used in basic rituals such as the daily agnihotra (SB 11.3.2.1)[26] and the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice (ibid.:11.1.2.6).[27] The use of the mithuna in the sacrificial context emphasised, as suggested earlier (Chapter II), the instrumentality of the wife in the procreative process. This was also ensured through the symbolic enactment of heterosexual intercourse. For instance, water was poured into the folded hands of the sacrificer's wife during the agnihotra, to ensure the birth of prajā or offspring (SSS 2.10.5,6), while she was expected to place sacred grass between her thighs (SSS 1.15.13-14) or on her navel (ASS 1.11.2) during the new and full moon sacrifice for a similar purpose. While this implied a certain recognition of the procreative role of the wife,[28] the context in which this was recognised, controlled, and ritualised by the sacrificer and the priesthood, meant, in effect, that women were denied control over the process. This lack of control is also reflected in the legend of Manu (SB 1.8.1.7-11) who was conceived of as obtaining a daughter named Ilā from the sacrifice, and using her as a sacrificial offering in order to obtain prajā.

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[26] As many as six mithunas were employed in the agnihotra (SB 11.3.2.1). These included the yajamāna and his wife, the calf and cow, pot and coals, the offering and dipping spoons, the āhavanīya fire and the fuel, and the āhuti or offering and the svāhākāra.

[27] Besides, as noted earlier (Chapter II), the mithuna was incorporated within the soma sacrifice and its variants which legitimated positions of status.

[28] For instance, scholars such as Dange (1979:71) are enthralled by what they regard as the elevation of the sacrificer's wife in this context to become a general "WIFE" or female partner on the ritual plane, without examining the degree of control the woman herself exercised over this process of elevation.

The elaboration of the procreative process is also evident in the development of other "means" of reproduction to which women were denied access. These included knowledge of various kinds--of the significance of rituals like the agnihotra, darśapūrṇamāsa, agniṣṭoma, and cāturmāsyas (e.g., SSS 10.14.8, 10.15.8, 16.23.6).[29] Mystic knowledge or knowledge of particular texts was also viewed as a means of obtaining sons (e.g., AA 3.2.15, CU 1.5.2, BAU 5.13.1) or offspring (e.g. CU 2.11.2, BAU 6.1.6).

The ritualisation of procreation is also evident in saṁskāras such as marriage (RV 10.85.45, AGS 1.7.6, ApGS 6.11, SGS 1.16.8,11), where prayers were offered to ensure that the bride produced sons, and in the rituals associated with pregnancy such as the puṁsavana (ApGS 14.9) and the sīmantonnayana (ibid.:14.1). Given the dominant role assigned to the husband or priest in such rituals, the notion of the male as determining or controlling procreation would have been strengthened.

In this situation, obtaining offspring was viewed as the outcome of a two or three-fold process--physical, ritual and spiritual. While both men and women had more or less equal access to the first, the second and third were male-dominated.[30] Hence, given their access to such "means" of reproduction, the role of men in procreation was magnified, while that of women was marginalised.[31] Not

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[29] In most cases Prajāpati was supposed to have obtained prajā through perceiving and performing these sacrifices.

[30] For details, see Section IV.

[31] It is also likely that the use of rituals was related to the uncertainties associated with the physical process of pregnancy and childbirth. Nevertheless, the specific form of the rituals and their control meant that the role of men, as fathers or priests, was viewed as crucial. At another level, the notion of creation implicit in the cosmogonies referred to earlier (Chapters II-IV) suggested that sexual intercourse was not a creative activity, unlike austerity, or more typically, the performance of a sacrifice.

surprisingly, this was consolidated in the recognition of paternal control over children in prescriptive literature (e.g., VDS 15.6).[32]

The offspring obtained, moreover, were connected with the father through rituals. For instance, the son was first fed by the father (BAU 6.4.25) and then handed over for breast-feeding to the mother (ibid.:6.4.27),[33] such rituals serving to incorporate the newborn son within the patrilineage, apart from asserting the father's role in the process of childbirth (Kessler 1976:77).[34] Besides, the possibility of recognising a range of sons other than natural ones was recognised (GDS 28.34-35, VDS 17.26-39).

At another level, the importance of the physical process of birth was minimised through the growing emphasis on the upanayana or the initiation prescribed for men and boys belonging to the first three varṇas. This was thought to lead to a second birth (e.g., ADS 1.1.1.16, GDS 1.10, VDS 2.3) which was explicitly considered to be superior to the first.[35] The second birth, moreover, was a

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[32]This provides for the adoption of a son by a man. The father to be was expected to invite his bandhus (kinsmen), the boy selected for adoption also ideally being an adūrabāndhava (close kinsman), inform the rāja and perform certain rituals (VDS 15.6). Thus, apart from the support of kinsmen, that of both the political and the sacral authority was sought in such a situation.

[33]The first food was supposed to consist of curd, honey, and clarified butter (BAU 6.4.24), the ingredients of the madhuparka, whose significance has been noted earlier.

[34]The tendency to ritualise childbirth may have also been part of an attempt to convert it into a social act (Oakley 1979:608), divesting it of its potentially dangerous or disruptive natural elements. At the same time, the particular form of the rituals negated the role of women in the process.

[35]The upanayana was also a means of dealing with the vexed question of male puberty. As Kessler (1976:80) observes, there is no single marked chronological or physiological point at which men attain puberty. For women, on the other hand, menstruation marks a clear demarcation between childhood and womanhood. Ritual initiation, by creating an artificial turning point for the boy, was certainly one way of overcoming this problem.

spiritual one, in which the ācārya or teacher virtually usurped the role of the mother (SB 11.5.4.17).[36]

Almost simultaneously, women's role in procreation and consequently their sexuality, was devalued. This is evident from the growing tendency to view menstruation and childbirth as polluting processes. Hence, touching, conversing with, or even seeing such women had to be avoided (e.g., SGS 4.11.6, PGS 2.8.4, ADS 1.5.16.19, GDS 23.12,35, VDS 4.38, 23.12).[37]

At another level, the growing emphasis on procreation raised the problem of regulating access to potentially reproductive women. Prescriptive literature was marked by an insistence that such women marry (GDS 18.21, VDS 17.67, BDS 4.1.15) and reproduce.[38] Neverthele

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[36]Initially, while the upanayana represented a symbolic rebirth it was by no means regarded as the only way of being born or reborn. This is evident from the statement (SB 11.2.1.1) that a man had three births--a physiological one, another when he performed a sacrifice, and the third after death. The three births are enumerated somewhat differently in the AA (2.5.1.3-15), where they are equated with different physiological stages--the first when semen is poured into a woman, the second at birth, and the third after death.

[37]This was extended to the notion of women as polluting in general, further examples of which will be noted in the next section. At the same time, it was perhaps unwittingly recognised that from the point of view of the woman, reproduction in a gender-stratified society could be a source of weakness. This is evident from the characterisation of an unimpregnated (apravītā) cow as one which possessed unimpaired vigour (ayātayāmnī, SB 3.3.1.16), this being used for exchanging soma in the ritual context. A similar understanding probably underlay the terminological changes in the words commonly used to designate the wife. These shifted from jāyā with its emphasis on the procreative role of the woman, to patnī, envisaging her as a counterpart to the pati, to bhāryā, literally she who has to be borne Semantically, the shift was from a positive link with procreation to a negative, passive role in the process. It is likely that this was associated with the structuring of procreation within the context of the gṛha.

[38]It is this which probably explains the condemnation of those guilty of killing an ātreyī, a woman who had bathed after menstruation and was hence potentially reproductive (ADS 1.9.24.9, GDS 22.11).

the existence of women who did not conform to the norm, including prostitutes and unfaithful wives, was recognised, although they were viewed with disfavour (BSS 2.5, ADS 1.6.19.14, GDS 17.15, VDS 14.10, 14.19).

As important was the continued debate on the relative importance of procreative partners, which was never finally resolved. This is reflected in the debate on the role of the retas or sperm and the yoni or womb in procreation (e.g., SB 6.3.1.70)[39] as well as in the problem posed by the offspring born of a man other than the husband. On the analogy of the field (the woman) and the seed, progeny were supposed to belong to the man who owned the field. Nevertheless, parabīja (literally the seed of another) was regarded as potentially dangerous (ADS 2.6.13.6, BDS 2.2.3.36, VDS 17.9). However, recognising the importance of the parabīja implicitly weakened the claims to the ownership of the "field" or the woman. Similarly, denying the importance of the reproductive role of women, if carried to its logical conclusion, led to the opinion attributed to Yājñavalkya (SB 1.3.1.21), that it did not really matter if the wife consorted with other men. Defining the limits of individual responsibility for procreation thus presented almost intractable problems.

Besides, there is evidence to suggest that women may have resisted the role assigned to them in procreation. This is reflected in the relative paucity of goddesses in comparison to gods, who were invoked in prayers for offspring. More important, those responsible for the destruction of bhrūṇas or embryos were conceived of as

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39 It also underlay the discussion on which of the parents ought to undergo a period of impurity following the death of a child (BDS 1.5.11.17-19, GDS 14.14-15, VDS 4.21-23).

demonesses (e.g., RV 10.155.2)[40] instead of as demons. Besides, in the human context, every patnī was regarded as a potential destroyer of prajā (prajāghnī, PGS 1.11.2), this attribute having to be conjured away through chants and rituals.[41] That there were women who may have resisted the specific social construction of reproduction is also evident from the provision for banishing the bhāryā or wife who did not (BDS 4.1.22) or could not (ibid.:2.2.4.6) co-operate in the process.

It is in this context that attempts to institutionalise marriage need to be viewed. This involved the hierarchical arrangement of different forms of marriage, with a marked preference for those requiring the gift of a daughter. While this was implicit in the term most commonly used for the proceedings, vivāha, which was derived from the root vah suggesting the carrying away of the daughter from the house of her parents (Chatterjee Sastri 1972:15, Prabhu 1954:150, Shastri 1949:263) as well as in the notion of the bride as the gift of the gods, including Soma, the gandharvas, and Agni (RV 10.85.41, PGS 1.4.16, VDS 28.5), myths point to the existence of a range of alternative possibilities. This included the choice of husbands by Sūryā (RV 1.119.5) as well as a mutual choice of partners who cement the bond with an exchange of gifts, as in the case of the Heaven and Earth (PVB 7.10.1-3). A third possibility, which, as noted earlier (Chapter II), was associated with Prajāpati, involved the gift of

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[40] The possibility of human bhrūṇahas was also recognised. These included men and women who were regarded as ritually polluting (BSS 27.9) and condemned (e.g., ADS 1.9.24.8, GDS 21.9, VDS 1.20).

[41] The patnī was also conceived of as gṛhaghnī, i.e., a destroyer of the gṛha in the same context.

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the daughter. It was this which was developed through rituals and prescriptions.

Marriage, moreover, was explicitly connected with the commencement of gārhapatya and the continuation of the patrilineage (e.g., RV 10.85.42), with the wife being acquired for procreation and wealth (ibid.:10.85.41).[42] The association of marriage with prosperity is also evident in the saptapadī rite, where the seven steps were for iṣā, ūrjā, rāyaspoṣa, mayobhava, prajā or paśu, the ṛtus, and sakhya (food, strength, wealth, comfort or well-being, offspring or cattle, the seasons, and companionship respectively, PGS 1.8.1, AGS 1.7.19, SGS 1.14.6). It is significant that the first textual reference to this formula occurs not in the context of the marriage ritual, but in the soma sacrifice, being used by the adhvaryu while leading the cow used for the exchange of soma (e.g., ApSS 10.22.12, 10.23.1). The notion of Soma as the embodiment of prosperity has been referred to earlier (Chapter IV), and the use of the chant in the context of the marriage ritual was probably a means of ensuring the prosperity of the gṛhapati to be, through the appropriation of the powers inherent in the bride.

The emphasis on exchanging women as the ideal form of marriage is also reflected in the recognition and hierarchical ordering of six or eight types of marriage in the later brahmanical tradition. While these may have represented variants practised in different communities, or amongst different social strata, the ordering which was enforced betrayed a preference for forms which included patriarchal

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[42] This notion was reiterated in the legend of Pururavas and Urvaśī, where the latter was conceived of as bringing vasu or wealth and vayas or longevity for her father-in-law (RV 10.95.4).

elements (Lingat 1973:59-60, R.S.Sharma 1983b:53). For instance, the first and the best form of marriage, commonly referred to as brāhma (AGS 1.6.1, GDS 4.6, BDS 1.11.20.2, VDS 1.30) involved the gift of the daughter by her father, who also endowed her with ornaments. The second form, daiva, considered only slightly less meritorious, was characterised by the gifting of the daughter in the sacrificial context (AGS 1.6.2, GDS 4.9, BDS 1.11.20.5, VDS 1.31). The prājāpatya form was probably ranked third on account of the conditional nature of the gift of the daughter (Chatterjee 1956: 48) who was given so that the newly-wed couple could fulfil dharma together (AGS 1.6.3, BDS 1.11.20.3, GDS 4.7).

The less desirable forms of marriage involved different kinds of exchanges. These included the ārṣa, ranked fourth (AGS 1.6.4, GDS 4.8, BDS 1.11.20.4, VDS 1.32) in which the bridegroom gave a cow and a bull to his father-in-law,[43] and the gāndharva, ranked fifth, based on the mutual consent of the bride and the bridegroom, without any tangible material exchange, or parental intervention (AGS 1.6.5, GDS 4.10, BDS 1.11.20.6, VDS 1.33). The sixth form, the āsura, involved the exchange of the woman for wealth (AGS 1.6.6, GDS 4.11, BDS 1.11.20.7), while the last two types, the paiśāca and the rākṣasa (AGS 1.6.7,8, GDS 4.13,12, VDS 1.34) involved the carrying off of the woman, forcibly or otherwise. It is likely that such unions were condemned as they involved a violation of the father's claim to legitimately control and give his daughter (R.S.Sharma 1983b:53).[44]

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[43] The designation of this form as ārṣa, implying an association with the ṛṣis, suggests that this was probably an ancient and venerated practice which was gradually devalued.

[44] It is likely that the condemnation of anuloma and pratiloma unions was also partly due to the violation of patriarchal rights

The discourse on procreation and its control indicates both th possibilities and the problems inherent in asserting the dominance of a single man, the grhapati, over the process. While a successful assertion of such control could result in an ability to expand and dispose of a range of resources, including potentially procreative women, labour, and by extension, the produce of labour, it was, nonetheless, not easily established. This is evident both from the variety of means devised to regulate the process as well as from the recognition of deviations from the ideal. In this context, the grhapati attempted to reinforce his position by asserting his control over other resources and their distribution as well as by using some of these resources to forge ties with socio-political categories whic were emerging into dominant positions and whose support was useful in enabling the grhapati to consolidate his position vis-a-vis other kinsfolk.

One of the distinctive features of the early Vedic tradition was the association of wealth with household units rather than with individual menbers of the household or kin group. This is reflected in prayers to obtain dvipadas and catuśpadas, two and four-footed beings respectively, for the niveśa (RV 9.69.7), cattle for the grha (ibid.:9.49.2), jewels for the dama (ibid.:6.74.1), rayi for the okas (ibid.:1.64.10), and prosperity for the kṣaya (ibid.:8.27.16). At another level, those who prayed for cattle, for instance, were commonly conceived of as a plurality. As opposed to this, in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently, paśu, anna, or prajā, were desired for the individual male sacrificer.[45] In other words, the

[45] As suggested earlier (Chapter II) while rituals to ensure material prosperity may have been used as magical mechanisms to ensure production, they were also a means of legitimising the control over resources by the successful yajamāna.

issue of ownership and/or control emerged as one of central importance.[46] More specifically, this meant that the claims of individual men to such resources was recognised and legitimated, possibly at the expense of more amorphous, less clearly defined claims.

The issue is thus in focus and its envisaged resolution is evident in the discussion on dāya or inheritance. The term itself occurs rarely in the Rg Veda, and has the sense of reward rather than inheritance (Basu 1925:26). It was thus evidently a new institution, and as in the cases referred to earlier, its development was handled through legends and prescriptions rather than through myths, pointing to the fact that it was probably not entirely consonant with earlier values and practices.

Legends pertaining to dāya almost invariably associated the institution with Manu, the primeval man and founder of the human race (e.g., AB 5.22.9, BSS 14.5, BDS 2.2.3.2, VDS 17.52). The features of the institution implicit in the legend and later generalised as prescriptions in the Dharma Sūtras are significant. To start with, the transfer of the dāya was envisaged as taking place amongst kinsmen, exemplified by Manu and his sons, to the exclusion of kinswomen. Secondly, the kinsmen involved were conceived of as belonging to different generations, although a sharing of resources was envisaged amongst brothers. Third, the kinsmen eligible to

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[46] Less directly, the sacrifices recommended for the householder, details of which are discussed below (Section IV), were viewed as a means of ensuring general prosperity. As suggested earlier (Chapters II-IV), the fact that the sacrificer was regarded as capable of ensuring such prosperity would have strengthened his claims to produce or productive resources.

participate in the process were those who were active householders--Manu's son Nābhanediṣṭa was deprived of a share as he was not a householder--his father finding a way out by teaching him a certain sacrifice which enabled him to obtain a thousand, possibly cattle (AB 5.22.9).

The close parallels envisaged in the prescriptions of the Dharma Sūtras are striking. For instance, women were described as adāyā, i.e., without a dāya or inheritance, as they were nirindriyā or devoid of strength (BDS 2.2.3.47). Those eligible to participate in the process included fathers and sons (ADS 2.6.14.1, GDS 28.1,2) or men who were considered to be their equivalents. These included those who were classified as less legitimate sons (GDS 28.35), sapiṇḍas, i.e., men belonging to three preceding and three succeeding patrilineal generations, and brothers (BDS 1.5.11.7), and those with whom spiritual kinship was established, including the ācārya or teacher and the antevāsin or disciple (ADS 2.6.14.3, VDS 17.82). Primogeniture was evidently not very significant. Finally, those who had entered a different āśrama (i.e., apart from that of the householder) were considered ineligible to receive a share (VDS 17.52).

Dāyabhaga[47] thus structured the sharing of resources between men and women and amongst men, and legitimated a directional transfer of resources from one generation of householders to the next. Not surprisingly, this was described as conducive to the increase of dharma (dharmavṛddhi, GDS 28.4). While this has been interpreted

[47] The term dāyabhaga as used in the present context refers literally to the sharing of the inheritance rather than to the school of law which was later known by that name.

as reflecting a multiplication of the cult (Lingat 1973:62), it is possible that it was thought to lead to the proliferation of dharma in a broader sense, as defined earlier (Chapter V), involving the sustenance of the new socio-political order through the branching out of a particular form of household organisation which provided the basis for consolidating resources as well as for generating them.

The norms which evolved regarding dāyabhāga also meant a denial of earlier or alternative patterns of sharing resources within the household as well as amongst kinsfolk. It is likely that this may have met with some amount of resistance, which was partly met by recognising the validity of deśa and kula dharma, the practices specific to particular regions or families (ADS 2.6.15.1) in matters of inheritance.[48] At another level, it was countered by building up and reinforcing ties between the gṛhapati and those in control of socio-political power, through systems of exchange. This was important from the point of view of both participants--for the gṛhapati, connection with the wider networks of power was useful in consolidating his position vis-a-vis other members of the household or kinship network[49] whereas for the rājā or the priest, the connection with the gṛhapati provided access to both the economic resources of

[48] Besides, some resources, including strīdhana or the wealth of women, were not included within the dāyabhāga and could be handed from mother to daughter (GDS 28.25, BDS 2.2.3.44, VDS 17.46). However, it may not have been possible to convert such wealth into access to productive resources.

[49] In a different context Gailey (1987:199) argues that while taxation may represent a demand on the household, individual responsibility for payment often legitimates individual claims to the resources of the household. The need to meet priestly demands may have resulted in a similar development in the context under discussion.

the grha as well as to its personnel.[50]

The implications of the connections which were developed between the grhapati and those in positions of status are evident from an examination of dakṣiṇā and dāna. From the grhapati's perspective, the ability to channelise resources in such exchanges guaranteed his access to the sacred and would have legitimated his claim to control and distribute the productive resources of the grha. Hence, although such exchanges may not have been very significant in terms of the quantity of resources transferred, as noted earlier (Chapters II, VII), the ability to participate in them strengthened his claims to other resources as well.

Given the significance of such exchanges, it is not surprising that women were not expected to participate in them. In fact, the only form of ritual gift-giving open to women was that of the first alms to the brahmacārin who commenced his career by begging from either his teacher's wife or from his own mother (SB 11.3.3.7, SGS 2.6.5, PGS 2.5.5, BDS 1.2.3.17-18). As mentioned earlier, the initiation of the brahmacārin was regarded as his second birth, which was viewed as superior to his first, physical birth. At the same time, the role of the mother could not be totally negated, hence she was associated with providing physical sustenance to the brahmacārin, just as his teacher was expected to provide him with spiritual sustenance. What is also significant is that this donation was confined within the kin network of the grha, with the mother offering

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[50] The importance of the grhapati for the socio-political order is also evident in the characterisation of the grhapati as one of the seven treasures of the cakkavatti or universal sovereign in the Buddhist tradition (Chakravarti 1987:67-68).

alms to her son or someone regarded as his equivalent, contrasting with the gifts made by the grhapati, which connected him with those beyond his own grha. Thus, women had fewer opportunities of using access to distribution as a means of mediating between the household and other institutions.[51]

While some forms of exchange were thus recognised as important and prestigious and participation in them was carefully regulated, others were marginalised. These included those amongst kinsfolk whose relationship was not hierarchically ordered. Such supportive exchanges may have been reciprocal rather than directional, and probably included those amongst jñātis (RV 10.117.9), sakhās (ibid.: 10.117.4), and bandhus (ibid.:8.21.4). Given the more or less equivalent status of the participants, it is likely that the resources transferred in such exchanges would have been more or less symmetrical over a period of time.[52] However, such exchanges were not developed further within the brahmanical tradition. On the contrary, appropriating the wealth of the undifferentiated kin community was recognised as a legitimate goal, both in major sacrifices such as the rājasūya (e.g., LSS 9.3.16) and in the course of routine domestic rituals such as the new and full moon sacrifice (SB 1.2.1.7).

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[51] That women may have attempted to participate in such exchange is suggested by the legend of Dhvasrā and Puruṣanti (PVB 13.7.12), two women who evidently wanted to give a thousand, presumably cattle, to two sages named Taranti and Purumidha. The latter wished to take the gift without formally receiving it, ultimately doing so through two sāmans named after them. Thus, the gifts made by the women were denied any formal value, and, as a result, there was no question of any access to prestige, nor was the control over productive resources by women legitimised.

[52] Women evidently had some claims to jñāti dhana, the wealth of the jñāti (ADS 2.6.14.9). However, not surprisingly, such claims were supposed to be forbidden in the śāstras (ibid.:2.6.14.10).

Simultaneously, the offering of the madhuparka and arghya were constantly enjoined. As noted earlier, these were symbolic offerings to those who were regarded as worthy of respect, with the gṛhapati as the donor, while the recipients included the ācārya, ṛtvik, snātaka, all associated with the domain of the sacred, the rājā, the śvaśura or father-in-law, and less frequently, the pitṛvya or paternal uncle, and the vivāhya or the groom (AGS 1.24.2-4, ApGS 13.19, PGS 1.3.1, KGS 4.4.21, ADS 2.4.8.6, GDS 5.28, BDS 2.3.6.36). Thus, less structured exchanges amongst kinsfolk were replaced by hierarchically ordered ties binding together kinsmen belonging to different generations and different households. As important, relationships of support amongst kinsfolk were reduced to symbolic exchanges. As a result, the claims to the resources of the household were reduced, permitting the consolidation of control in the hands of the gṛhapati, while the position of a select group of kinsmen was accorded recognition.

At another level, the householder was expected to provide for dependents within the household such as children, those who were sick or pregnant, women staying with him, and elders (e.g., SGS 2.14.21, PGS 2.9.13, ADS 2.2.4.12, GDS 5.26, BDS 2.7.13.5), the householder himself being expected to eat after the others. While this ensured that all members of the household received a share of food, the fact that this was channelled through the gṛhapati emphasised their dependence on him, and reinforced his ultimate control over the distribution of the produce of the gṛha.

While claims to the resources of the household on the basis of generalised ties of kinship were thus regulated, other claims, including that of hospitality or ātithya were recognised, the daily

offering of food to the atithi or guest being prescribed in all the Gṛhya and Dharma Sūtras (e.g., PGS 2.9.12, ADS 1.4.14.1, VDS 8.7).[53] The principles evolved regarding ātithya emphasised its universality. For instance, food had to be offered even to dogs, crows, caṇḍālas, and patitas (VDS 11.10). In this sense, the scope of ātithya was wider than the kinship network. At the same time, the form of ātithya was expected to vary according to varṇa, as noted earlier (Chapter VII), with the more exalted guest being offered food first. Thus, the offering and receiving of ātithya meant the introduction of a different set of norms regarding the distribution of household produce.

Despite its significance, ātithya may have met with some amount of resistance. This is suggested by the constant reiteration of the need to serve the atithi as well as by threats of imminent destruction in case the gṛhapati ate without offering something to the guest (ADS 2.3.7.3, BDS 2.7.13.6). It is likely that ātithya met with resistance at two levels-- at the level of the gṛhapati, who may have resented sharing control over resources and produce, especially if such control had been wrested from the wider kin group, and at the level of the other members of the gṛha, who may have resisted the consolidation of control exercised by the gṛhapati, typified in the institutionalisation of ātithya.

The increasing emphasis on defining legitimate claimants to resources was, in a sense, indicative of a shift from a clan-oriented

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[53] As in the case of dāna, the obligation to receive ātithya was also stressed. For instance, the ADS (1.6.19.13) states that if a man refused food that had been offered, his pitṛs would not eat for fifteen years.

to a lineage-oriented system. The former was "an inclusive unit tending to include all possible members even though that means offering shares in the clan's corporate resources" (Fried 1967:124). The latter on the other hand restricted both membership, and, by extension, access to productive resources.

At another level, the repeated emphasis on defining those eligible to participate in various kinds of exchanges implicitly indicates continuous challenges to the process.[54] It is in this situation that socialisation into definite roles acquired a growing importance, which we will explore in the next section.

[54] As Gailey (1987:ix) observes: "The conflict between producing peoples orienting their work towards subsistence, and civil authority protecting the classes that siphom off goods and labour is a [illegible] continual, ongoing, process" (italics original).

IV

Given the differential roles expected of men and women on the one hand, and of men in different stages of their lives on the other, socialisation was necessary to provide information regarding these roles, as well as to ensure their acceptance. We had suggested earlier (Section I) that the problem of access to, and the use made of the sacred, as reflected within the brahmanical tradition provide us with insights into the process of socialisation. Here we will explore the possibility of treating "ritual forms, like speech forms, as transmitters of culture which are generated in social relations, and which, by their selective emphases, exercise a constraining effect on social behaviour" (Douglas 1973:21).[55]

The use of the sacred for purposes of socialisation required, in the first place, the definition of the sacred and regulating access to it. At another level, it necessitated the incorporation of values and norms considered desirable within sacral activities, and their reiteration to ensure that these were effectively communicated. The latter focused on defining the relationship between husband and wife in particular and men and women in general, as well as on patrilineal ties. At the same time, other kinship ties or possibilities were regarded as less important or marginalised.

The definition of the sacred within the brahmanical tradition was, as we have seen, an expanding one--while the initial focus may have been on the sacrificial cult, other activities such as the pursuit of mystic knowledge or the performance of

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[55] As Kertzer (1988:25) observes: "Ritual is used to constitute power, not just reflect power that already exists."

saṁskāras[56] were gradually incorporated within the priestly definition of sacrality. As suggested earlier, it is likely that the widening of the sacred was a means of coping with alternative belief systems by incorporating, absorbing, and, in the process, brahmanising them. The process involved, at one level, the structuring of the ability to define sacral activities in terms of gender (and varṇa), which was then extended and developed to manipulate such activities to convey and reiterate messages regarding the relationship of kinsmen and women at a variety of levels.

At one level, the issue of defining the sacred was handled through myths. At another level, the entire discussion was embedded in the codification of the ritual or sacral tradition, reflected in the composition and compilation of the texts under consideration. Myths explored the question of the origin of the sacrifice. As noted earlier, the question was often posed in terms of who had discovered the sacrifice, the answers offered being linked to deities regarded as representative of the dominant socio-political categories. In terms of gender, some myths envisaged goddesses such as Uṣas and

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[56] "Saṁskāras essentially were those rites which were believed to impart fitness to a person enabling him to face the known and unknown dangers before him in a new period of his life" (Gonda 1975iv: 186). The incorporation of saṁskāras within the brahmanical tradition may also be viewed as a process of vedicisation (Renou 1953:40) characterised by the introduction of mantras from the śrauta cult into the gṛhya rituals. The term saṁskāra, denoting a rite of passage, is rarely found in early Vedic literature (Pandey 1969:15). This is not to suggest that such rites were unknown, but it may indicate that these had not been incorporated within the earlier brahmanical tradition. The focusing on rites of passage was clearly related to their association with "the symbolism of life crises" which "deals with perennial problems that are not amenable to scientific solutions and is therefore essentially ambiguous, not given to immediate searching scrutiny" and "its intrinsic potential for becoming an impelling force..that can move women and men to action spontaneously 'from the inside'." (Cohen 1979:98).

Naktā as the mothers of the sacrifice, who brought it to mortals (RV 5.41.7). However, such conceptualisations were relatively few in comparison to the links envisaged between gods such as Agni, Soma, and later, Prajāpati, and the cult. Besides, they were not developed further in the later Vedic tradition.[57] What is more, Vāc, the goddess who was regarded as the "typical" frivolous woman (SB 3.2.4.4-6) was conceived of as abandoning the gandharvas who possessed knowledge of the Vedas in favour of the devas, who could merely sing. In the long-run, the devas, and not Vāc, were thought to have acquired control over sacred learning and the related sacrificial cult. Thus, there is a perceptible shift between early and later Vedic mythological traditions, with the latter focusing squarely on the issue of the control of the cult and resolving it in favour of gods as opposed to goddesses.

That the mythical resolution ran parallel to the human situation is evident from the composition and compilation of the corpus of texts associated with the sacred. To being with the earliest canonised sacral literature, the hymns of the Ṛg Veda, it is well-known that only a handful of the sūktas of the text are ascribed to women, and even in these cases, the authorship is not always

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[57] Nevertheless, feminine divinities, typified by the Āpaḥ or waters, were regarded as important within the framework of the sacrifice, being equated with it (e.g., AB 2.8.2, SB 1.1.1.12). At the same time, a great rivalry (vibhrāṭṛvya) was thought to exist between the waters and the fire, feminine and masculine symbols respectively, both of which were considered to be basic to the cult (SB 1.1.1.21).

certain.[58] Thus, although there was no explicit prohibition agai it, it is obvious that in practice, defining the sacred through composition of hymns was an activity to which women had only lim access.[59] As an extension of this, their role in defining the nature and scope of the sacrificial cult in which the Vedic hymn were employed as chants, was also restricted.

This is reflected in the paucity of references to women per ing sacrifices. In most instances (e.g., RV 4.42.9, 5.61.5-7), circumstances under which women performed sacrifices were regard as exceptional. More generally, there was no feminine equivalen the term yajamāna, underscoring the fact that the male alone had right to initiate the performance of the sacrifice (Leslie 1989:

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[58]Thus Sastri (1969:24) points out that Viśvavārā, thought be the name of a woman seer (composer of RV 5.28), may not be a proper name at all. Secondly, in some cases, only parts of hymn attributed to women (ibid.:25). This includes the hymn attribut Lopamudrā (RV 1.179), while other hymns "are attributed to myth gical beings and personifications of abstract qualities" (Sastri 1969:25). These include those attributed to Sūryā-Sāvitrī (RV 1 Indrāṇī (ibid.:10.145), Śraddhā-Kāmāyanī (ibid.:10.15), Śacī-Paulomī (ibid.:10.159). Sārpa rājñī (ibid.:10.189), and Urvaśi (10.95). As opposed to this, male seers were obviously central t the brahmanical tradition.

[59]The limitations under which women laboured are reflected the hymn attributed to Ghoṣā (RV 10.39.6), in which she appeals the gods as a son rather than as a daughter, which would suggest the latter could not legitimately claim divine favours.

[60]Besides, although presence of the patnī was regarded as essential for the sacrifice, variations could be introduced in t routine agnihotra (AB 7.32.8, ApSS 6.12.5) and the new and full sacrifice (SB 1.3.1.20, ApSS 2.6.4) in her absence, or arrangeme could be made to obtain another patnī to ensure ritual continuit (SSS 4.15.23). There is no suggestion that the patnī could acqu another yajamāna to enable her to complete the sacrifice on her In this context, it is not surprising that women could rarely de sacrificial goals. One of the few goals which was recognised fo women was that of obtaining a husband, the tryambakā iṣṭi being prescribed for the patikāmā maiden (BSS 5.16, ApSS 8.18.3) .

Although women had little or no role in defining the nature and content of sacrifices, they evidently retained some control over defining the norms and practices associated with rites of passage. For instance, what was prescribed by women could be followed during the funeral rites of the wife (bhāryā, ADS 2.6.15.9). They also had a certain say in marriage rituals (ApGS 2.15). Besides, they may have been able to define deśa, jāti, and kula dharma, i.e., the dharma of particular regions, castes and families (GDS 11.22, VDS 19.7). More generally, their role in defining dharma was acknowledged within some sections of the brahmanical tradition (ADS 2.11.29.15). Unfortunately, though understandably, the exact prescriptions which may have been formulated by women were not recorded.

What was recorded and codified in the Gṛhya Sūtras presents an amalgam of ritual traditions. On the one hand, a range of rites of passage was systematised, focusing in particular on the role of the gṛhapati, who was frequently recognised as a substitute for the priest in the process (Gonda 1980:194). At the same time, some of these rituals were given the character of a sacrifice by emphasising the use of fire.[61] On the other hand, the Gṛhya Sūtras incorporated watered-down versions of routine śrauta rituals such as the daily agnihotra (AGS 1.2.1,2) and the darśapūrṇamāsa (SGS 1.3.1-6), which were both simpler and less expensive than those prescribed in the Śrauta Sūtras, and in which the participation of priests was optional (AGS 1.3.6). The creation of such parallel rituals was probably useful in extending the scope of the śrauta rituals by making them

[61] Such occasions included the upanayana (AGS 1.20.2), wedding (ApGS 4.9), caula (AGS 1.17.2), the cutting of the beard (PGS 2.6.9), and the sīmantonnayana (ibid.:1.15.4).

more accessible. Moreover, both processes (i.e., the systematisation and incorporation of rites of passage and the simplification of the sacrificial cult) extended the sphere of influence of the priesthood, the significance of which has been referred to earlier (Chapters V and VI).[62]

It is evident then that the structuring of socialisation through ritual means implied, at the fundamental, definitional level, a recognition and enforcement of the gender hierarchy. At the same time, although less obviously, it implied the acceptance of a differential role vis-a-vis the sacred (and by extension, vis-a-vis other socio-political domains) for different kinsmen as well. As we shall see, the access men had to the sacred depended on their position within the kinship or household structure, with some positions such as that of the grhapati, being recognised as of central importance, whereas others were regarded as peripheral or even detrimental to the sacred/social order. Thus, access to the sacred communicated significant messages regarding the relative importance of kinsmen. We will explore the use of rituals vis-a-vis both these dimensions of socialisation.

Socialisation into gender roles focused primarily on enforcing a particular definition of the sexual and procreative role of women on the one hand and on the exclusion of women from other roles on

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[62] Initially, virtually every household type was associated with the performance of rituals. We have evidence, for instance, of the invocation of gods in the ksiti (RV 4.1.9), dama (ibid.:4.7.2), okas (ibid.:7.32.4), pastya (ibid.:9.65.23), ksaya (ibid.:9.9.2), and grha (ibid.:4.49.3). While there is no evidence to determine whether the form of ritual associated with different household types varied, the naming of the consolidated ritual tradition as grhya may indicate a certain selection which was biased in favour of the practices prevalent in the grha.

the other. Simultaneously, a causal relationship was developed between the two, i.e., the exclusion of women from non-sexual or non-procreative roles was implicitly and occasionally explicitly justified in terms of the understanding of what was viewed and portrayed as their natural role. At the same time, an effort was made to regulate their "natural" role through a range of social restrictions.

Of the various forms of sexual relationships referred to in the early Vedic tradition (Section II), only that between the pati and patnī/jāyā was recognised as legitimate within the later Vedic and subsequently developed ritual tradition. In fact, the patnī was virtually the only kinswoman whose presence was required for the sacrifice, ranging from the daily agnihotra (BSS 3.4) to the darśa-pūrṇamāsa (ApSS 1.6.12), and the cāturmāsyas (ibid.:8.5.40), as well as for rituals such as the soma sacrifice, rājasūya, and aśvamedha, as noted earlier (Chapters II and IV).[63] Thus, each performance of such rituals would have conveyed the notion that this was the sole possible or ideal form of the man-woman relationship.

The implications of this were elaborated during the fortnightly darśapūrṇamāsa (BSS 1.12, ApSS 2.5.9), during which the wife was considered to be identical with her divine counterparts, with a prayer being offered to ensure that she would be avidhavā and suputrā (i.e., not a widow and endowed with good sons) like Indrāṇī.

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[63] Apart from the patnī, the other categories of women who could participate in the ritual were the dāsīs or slave women who were probably even more dependent than wives. Occasionally, one was treated as a substitute for the other. For instance, either the dāsī or the patnī could grind the grain used for the offering during the new and full moon sacrifice (ApSS 1.21.8).

In other words, an effort was made, every fortnight, to endow her with what were viewed as the positive attributes of a husband and sons.

Within this single legitimate relationship, the position of the husband and the wife vis-a-vis the ritual was clearly differentiated. This was reflected in the very preparation for the sacrifice where rites were performed silently for the woman, while a variety of chants were used for the yajamāna (Gonda 1965:361). The ambiguity of the wife's position is also evident in the conceptualisation of her as the jaghanārdha or the hind part of the sacrifice, both in the context of the basic new and full moon sacrifice (SB 1.3.1.12) and in the vājapeya (Ibid.:5.2.1.8). At the same time, her lower half, the portion below the navel, was described as amedhya, literally unfit for the sacrifice, and had to be symbolically concealed (ibid.:1.3.1.13). Thus, the notion of the wife as potentially disruptive on account of her sexuality was reiterated regularly through rituals.

Besides, rituals such as the annual varuṇapraghāsa, one of the cāturmāsyas, provided an occasion for publicly questioning the wife regarding her sexual activities. She was expected to declare whether she had a lover or not (e.g., SB 2.5.2.20, ApSS 8.6.19-22). If she had a lover and declared this, the man would meet with divine retribution, whereas, if she did not declare the truth, a similar fate was expected to befall her jñātis or kinsfolk. Not surprisingly, the husband was not subjected to a similar interrogation.

Attempts were also made to regulate the sexuality of women in general, exemplified in the equation between the vedī or sacrificial altar and the yoṣā or woman in the new and full moon sacrifice

(SB 1.3.3.8), with provisions for covering it with grass so as to make it not naked, anagnā, in the presence of the devas or learned brāhmaṇas. This notion of female sexuality as potentially polluting and/or disruptive would have been reiterated in virtually every ritual, as the new and full moon sacrifice constituted the basic sacrificial paradigm which was modified and elaborated on other occasions.

The perception of women as disruptive also underlay the insistence on brahmacarya in ritual contexts in particular and sacral contexts in general.[64] While brahmacarya could have wider connotations, the notion of chastity was central to its definition (Gonda 1965:285). This was a pre-requisite for the acquisition and imparting of sacral knowledge (PGS 2.5.12, ADS 1.1.2.26, GDS 16.3, VDS 13.25-26) and formed a part of penances (GDS 22.3, VDS 24.5). Besides, it was a pre-requisite for virtually every sacrifice (BSS 10.59, ApSS 4.1.2).[65] The other acts which were often simultaneously prohibited included eating meat and speaking falsehood (BSS 2.20, ApSS 22.3.16), a telling commentary on the perception of sexual relations.

It has been argued (Turner 1969:104) that sexual abstinence very often leads to a reduction of sexual polarity. However, in the present context, where such abstinence was viewed as a possibility

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[64] For instance, it was required during the agnyādheya (BSS 2.20, ApSS 5.7.6), the cāturmāsyas (PVB 17.13.6, BSS 28.8, SSS 3.13.30, ApSS 8.4.5) and for the aśvamedha (SSS 16.1.8,9). It was also prescribed for saṁskāras, including marriage (AGS 1.8.10, ApGS 8.8., PGS 1.8.21, KGS 1.4.9).

[65] Occasionally, it could be extended to prohibit even talking to women (and śūdras) (ApSS 15.20.16). Besides, the rajasvalā or menstruating woman was viewed as actually polluting and denied access to the ritual (BSS 27.8).

open to only one of the participants in such relationships, it clearly strengthened the view that he who abstained was superior and purer than the object of abstinence, i.e., the woman. In othe words, a particular understanding of women's sexuality was reinfor this in turn providing a basis for structuring gender relations in other spheres as well.

At another level, as we have seen, the procreative role of wives was regulated and minimised through its ritualisation. This took a number of forms. It was evident in the exaltation of "alternative" births such as the dīkṣā which prepared the yajamāna for participation in the sacrifice[66] and in the upanayana. Both were characterised by the use of symbols representing the womb, membranes, etc. At the same time, such ritual births/rebirths wer regarded as superior to the physical process, preparing the reborn man for participation in the sacred. Besides, as noted earlier, the sacrifice itself was viewed as a means of ensuring procreation This implied a recognition of differential roles for men and women in the process. A similar notion was embedded in rites of passage such as marriage, which ideally involved the gift of a woman for procreative purposes (Section III), and the puṁsavana, literally the rite meant to ensure the production of male offspring (ApGS 14.9). At the same time, procreation, thus defined, was itself

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[66] The dīkṣā was evidently unknown in the early Vedic tradition (Eliade 1975:54, Potdar 1953:87).

[67] Apart from the examples noted earlier, the piṇḍapitṛyajña was viewed as a means of obtaining prajā (SSS 4.5.8, ApSS 1.10.10). In this context, impregnating powers were attributed to the piṇḍa or offering of food, symbolic of the bond between the deceased patrilineal ancestors and their successors.

regarded as an act of dharma (ADS 2.9.24.8), being a means of discharging the debt to the pitṛs (BDS 2.9.16.5).

More generally, the ritual context was used as a means of structuring gender relations. Thus, in the context of the daily agnihotra (SB 2.3.1.17), the offering to Manas and Vāc, conceived of as masculine and feminine respectively, was made in such a manner so as to ensure that the former possessed greater vīrya or strength than the latter. Similarly, in the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice (ibid.:1.3.1.9), a single "masculine" spoon was handled first, while numerous "feminine" spoons were handled later. This was equated with a single youth leading numerous women, evidently an ideal situation.[68]

The structuring of the relations between the sexes was not confined to sacrifices but extended to rites of passage as well. These distinguished between the two by prescribing that they could be performed with mantras for males but without mantras for females (e.g., AGS 1.15.10, 1.16.6, 1.17.19, etc., SGS 1.28.22). This meant that the verbal identification between the participant in the ritual and the gods, open to men, could not be developed in the case of women.[69] Besides, certain rites of passage such as the upanayana were open only to men. As suggested earlier (Section III), this marked the ritualisation of puberty. In a situation where ritual changes were viewed as superior to physiological changes,

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[68] The use of the soma sacrifice and its variants to structure gender relations has been referred to earlier (Chapters II-IV).

[69] For instance, in the upanayana, the male initiate was identified as the disciple of Indra, while the preceptor or ācārya was identified with Agni (SB 11.5.4.2).

the fact that boys and not girls had access to such a tradition would have demarcated their superiority and inferiority vis-a-vis one another. Given the fact that the upanayana or initiation entailed a change in the religious and social status of the boy and was viewed as preparatory to granting him access to forms of sacred knowledge and consequent empowerment, access or lack of access to the ritual was clearly socially significant, implying as it did a differential access to sacred learning.[70]

The upanayana and the period of brahmacarya which followed it were important in inculcating a sense of subordination and dependence in the student vis-a-vis the teacher (e.g., ADS 1.2.6.7, GDS 2.20-21, BDS 1.2.3.39, VDS 7.12). This was inculcated through gestures and movements as well as through the insistence on obedience. This probably ensured that students "would come out strongly imbued with faith in the divinely ordained nature and the essential soundness of the existing social organisation and the traditional cultural ideals" (Anjaria 1935:175).

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[70] Although we do have references to women philosophers such as Gārgī (BAU 3.8.1-12), there is nothing to indicate that women had legitimate access to this aspect of sacrality. Even modern scholars (e.g., Bhat 1978:94) characterise her as an aberration, an overzealous pupil. Megasthenes's account, cited by Max Muller (1968:24) corroborates the restrictions on the access to sacred learning as far as women were concerned, and suggests interesting reasons for the same: "The Indians did not communicate their metaphysical doctrines to women thinking that if their wives understood these doctrines and learned to be indifferent to pleasure and pain and to consider life and death as the same, they would no longer continue to be slaves of others. Or if they failed to understand them then they would be talkative and communicate this knowledge to those who had no right to it." On the other hand, references to men undergoing pupilhood and acquiring sacred knowledge in the process are fairly frequent (SB 2.4.4.4, 10.6.1.2-3, BAU 6.2.4, 2.1.4, CU 4.4.4. etc.).

Brahmacarya was also accompanied by the development of what may be termed "spiritual kinship" (Campbell 1964:223) between the teacher and taught through the communication of sacred learning and the performance of common rituals. This bond, moreover, was expressed in terms fairly similar to those which identified kinsmen. The claims of spiritual kinsmen to one another's property has been referred to earlier (Section III). Besides, the observances following the death of spiritual kinsmen were more or less similar to those prescribed on the death of other kinsfolk (e.g., AGS 4.4.19,21.26). The emphasis on the bond ensured an access to support outside the ordinary kin network for both participants. Women, unlike men, would not have had any access to such support structures.

In the later brahmanical tradition, marriage was viewed as the counterpart of the upanayana for the woman. However, unlike the upanayana, which marked the entry of the boy into the sacral domain, and his gradual empowerment, the marriage ritual, whereby the bride was separated from her natal home and incorporated within her marital one (AGS 1.7.13, ApGS 3.3., PGS 1.4.15), had connotations of conquest.[71] Needless to say, the woman was not envisaged as the conqueror.

The notion of marriage as a conquest is evident from the use of the rāṣṭrabhṛt, jaya, and abhyātāna formulae (e.g., PGS 1.5.7) and from the provision to destroy the "evil" inherent in the bride (e.g., RV 10.85.44, PGS 1.11.2), this being defined in terms of a potential ability to destroy the pati, prajā, paśu, gṛha, and yaśas (e.g., PGS 1.11.2).

[71] That the process may have been painful for the woman is evident from the provisions for mantras to be used in case she cried (AGS 1.8.4, SGS 1.15.2).

The ritual was, moreover, structured to convey the notion of the bride and the groom as unequal partners. For instance, while tests were devised to ascertain the "true" nature of the bride,[72] no parallel tests were prescribed for the bridegroom. Besides, the ability to chant mantras was restricted to the husband, who occasionally spoke on behalf of the wife as well (SGS 1.14.1). In other words, the ritualisation of marriage provided another occasion for reiterating the envisaged differences between the sexual partners.

With the decline of the major śrauta sacrifices, the performance of the pañcamahāyajñas was emphasised as a duty expected of every householder. This included relatively simple offerings to the devas, pitṛs, brāhmaṇas, manuṣyas, and bhūtas (SB 11.5.6.1, AGS 3.1.2, GDS 5.3, BDS 2.6.11.1). Amongst these activities, the offering of hospitality was regarded as particularly important, being viewed as a meritorious activity, capable of leading to the attainment of heaven (ADS 2.3.6.6).[73] As in the case of other recognised sacral activities, women were not expected to participate directly in such offerings.

While access to the sacred thus conveyed a sense of social difference, this was often extended to a denial of the right to define or legitimise alternative socio-political possibilities which

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[72] The test was based on the selection of a lump of clay, the bride's nature being supposedly revealed by the lump she selected (e.g., AGS 1.5.5, ApGS 3.16,17).

[73] More elaborately, looking after the guest for a night was supposed to lead to bliss on earth, for two nights to bliss in the intermediate region, for three nights to bliss in heaven, and for four nights to limitless worlds (ADS 2.3.7.16). Besides, the hospitality offered to a guest was compared to a sacrifice to Prajāpati (ibid.:2.3.7.1-2).

may have been available to women. We had noted examples of this while discussing the myths surrounding the soma sacrifice which legitimated śraiṣṭhya and which was incorporated into virtually every ritual legitimating the change of political status (Chapters II, III, VI). We had seen how goddesses (and occasionally demonesses) were gradually portrayed as marginal[74] or as hostile to the performers of such sacrifices. The fear of goddesses harming the sacrificer was also reiterated in the new and full moon sacrifice (SSS 1.5.9) and similarly exorcised. As suggested earlier, the notion of the hostile goddess probably reflected social tensions which resulted from attempts to use rituals to perpetuate the values of an increasingly gender-stratified socio-political order. It is also likely that the concept of the hostile goddess reflected the stresses inherent in attempts to assimilate alternative, possibly goddess-centred, ritual traditions, and the people associated with them, within the fold of a more patriarchal religious system.

This possibility is reinforced by evidence which suggests that women were excluded from ritual roles which may have been open to them in earlier or alternative traditions. This is indicated, for instance, by the ambiguous position of the subrahmaṇya priest. Vāc, a goddess, was supposed to have functioned as the subrahmaṇya priest of the devas in a sattra (PVB 25.18.4), suggesting an association between this priest and feminine elements. On the human plane, however, the priestly role was not open to women. Nevertheless, the earlier tradition was not (or could not be) totally eliminated. Hence

[74]For instance, an offering to Vāc was converted into one to Prajāpati in the vājapeya (SB 5.1.3.11).

the subrahmaṇya priest was treated as symbolic of the feminine in the course of the ritual (AB 6.26.3), receiving the typically masculine bull as dakṣiṇā, the gift and the donee being viewed as a mithuna or a generative pair, consisting of a masculine and a feminine element.

In other instances, the evidence for appropriation is less ambiguous. For instance, in the new and full moon sacrifice (SB 1.1.4.13), the male priest was expected to respond instead of the wife in case a particular call was sounded. Besides, rituals in which wives participated actively were occasionally prohibited.[75]

At another level, the roles assigned to the yajamāna and his wife in the ritual context were clearly distinct. The former participated in what were regarded as sacred activities, making offerings, chanting mantras, etc., as opposed to routine chores, whereas the role of the wife was by and large an extension of her domestic activities. The use of the wife in reproductive symbolism in the ritual context has been noted above (Section III). Besides, she was associated with preparing the sacrificial offering, which would have been an extension of her domestic role as food-preparer (ApSS 1.21.8). She was also expected to perform sexual services, scrubbing the back of the sacrificer during the avabhṛta bath marking the end of a sattra (LSS 4.4.12).[76]

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[75] Thus the mahāvrata, in which the patnīs could play musical instruments, fulfilling the function of the ṛtviks or sacrificial priests, hoping thereby to attain svargaloka or heaven (FVB 5.6.8), was prohibited (SSS 17.6.2).

[76] More explicitly, a woman had to rub the upastha or penis of a snātaka (AGS 3.8.14).

Gender stratified access to sacrality provided the basis for extending similar restrictions to other spheres as well. For instance, legitimate access to the sacrifice provided the average male householder with a means of establishing identity with powerful gods, which was not open to women. Thus, the offering of the agnyādheya or the first establishment of the sacrificial fire was regarded as identical with the offering of Prajāpati (SB 2.2.1.4), the daily agnihotra was regarded as a means of winning and producing all that had been won and produced by Agni, Vāyu, and Sūrya (ibid.: 2.2.4.18), while the fortnightly new and full moon sacrifice established an identity between Agni Gṛhapati and his human counterpart (ibid.:1.9.3.19).[77] Besides, the yajamāna was identified with Agni, Varuṇa, and Indra during the cāturmāsyas (ibid.:2.6.3.1).[78]

The identification of the yajamāna with a range of deities was developed further at two levels. On the one hand, the performance of such sacrifices was regarded as a means of identifying with the role of the gods as ensurers of material prosperity, this in turn acquiring near cosmic dimensions. For instance, the daily agnihotra was viewed as a means of producing everything (SB 2.3.4.8), while the performance of the new and full moon sacrifice was thought to ensure rain, prosperity, the ripening of plants, and the production of animals with teeth on one jaw (ibid.:1.2.2.6, 1.3.4.7, 1.6.3.29).

At the same time, these rituals were associated with cosmic processes, with the agnihotra being regarded as a means of ensuring

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[77] He was also identified with Prajāpati in the same context (ibid.:1.6.1.20).

[78] Similar identifications were extended to the non-sacrificial context as well. Thus, the brahmacārin who knew the significance of his duties and performed them properly was expected to shine like Agni (BDS 1.2.4.8).

sunrise (SB 2.3.1.5), while the new and full moon sacrifice was conceived of as "kindling" or initiating seasonal changes (ibid.: 1.3.4.7). Besides, the new and full moon sacrifice (ibid.:1.3.5.8), the agnihotra (ibid.:2.3.3.18), and the cāturmāsyas (ibid.:2.6.3.1), were viewed as a means of attaining the saṁvatsara or the year, whose cosmic significance has been referred to earlier (Chapter II).[79]

At another level, the claims to ensuring general prosperity suggested an implicit identity between the yajamāna and other sacrificers who were associated with a similar role, such as the rājā or the śreṣṭha. As noted earlier (Chapter V), this identity was often explicitly underscored through rituals such as the agnihotra (ApSS 6.14.7), agnyādheya (SB 2.2.3.1), and both the śrauta and the gṛhya versions of the new and full moon sacrifice (SB 11.2.5.5; ApGS 2.7). The connection was also established through the saṁskāras such as the upanayana (ApGS 11.6), that prescribed for the snātaka on the completion of Vedic learning (ibid.:12.9), marriage (ibid.:5.11), and the sīmantonnayana or the parting of the hair of the wife by the husband during pregnancy (ibid.:14.2), through the use of the jaya verses, supposedly given to Indra by Prajāpati to ensure the former's victory over the viś (PGS 1.5.9).[80] Thus, the gṛhapati/yajamāna was identified with men of status and conceived of as fulfilling a similar role in the emerging socio-political order. Within the

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[79] The new and full moon sacrifice was also regarded as a means of attaining the three lokas and worlds (ibid.:1.3.5.13), while the agnyādheya or the setting up of the sacrificial fire was viewed as a cosmogonic act (ibid.:2.1.2.6).

[80] In other saṁskāras such as the caula or the first cutting of the hair, the razor used for the purpose was equated with that used for the divine rājas, Varuṇa and Soma (AGS 1.17.10, PGS 2.1.11).

domestic context, such an identification permitted the assertion of dominance vis-a-vis other members of the household.

This assertion of dominance was reiterated through routine rituals such as the agnihotra (BSS 3.8), and the new and full moon sacrifice (ApSS 1.10.3), which focused on the claims of the grhapati to the grha.[81] Moreover, all those sharing a common residence, the amātyas, were bound together to the yajamāna/grhapati through the sharing of the sacrificial oblations during the varuṇapraghāsa, sākamedha, and the soma and animal sacrifices (ApSS 8.5.41, 8.10.7, 13.5.6, 11.16.13).

The ideal grha and the relationships embedded in it were also symbolically established through the use of chants (AB3.12.12,13), with the individual self or ātman being equated with the stotriya or strophe, offspring or prajā with the anurūpa or antistrophe, which shared a common metre with the strophe, the patnī with the dhāyyā or additional verse inserted into certain hymns, paśu, the economic basis of the grha with the pragātha or triplet, while the grha itself, encompassing these elements, was equated with the sūkta or hymn. The symbolism is obvious: the ātman and prajā ideally shared a common basis, exemplified by the metre, the patnī, though necessary, was viewed as extraneous, cattle were ideally to be numerous, as signified by the use of the triplet in contrast to the standard couplet, with the grha being visualised as a unified whole incorporating these elements. The equation was carried further through the prescribed tonal variations. For instance, the stotriya

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81 A similar prayer was incorporated in the monthly piṇḍapitṛyajña (SB 2.4.2.24, SSS 4.5.1), with the pitṛs being requested to endow the sacrificer with a grha.

was to be recited in a moderate tone to ensure perfection of the self, the anurūpa had to be recited loudly to ensure that a man's offspring surpassed him, the dhāyyā had to be recited softly so that the wife did not retort or protest, the pragātha had to be recited in a sonorous voice in order to obtain cattle, and the sūkta had to be recited firmly to ensure that the gṛha was stable and provided support.

More specifically, patrilineal bonds within the gṛha were reinforced through rituals. This involved the recognition of the significance of the bond between the yajamāna and his patrilineal ancestors on the one hand, and of that between the yajamāna and his son on the other. Unlike the husband-wife bond, moreover, patrilineal ties were envisaged as more symmetrical and were based on a notion of mutual support.

The ties with patrilineal ancestors or pitṛs were recognised as valuable in the agnyādheya, which included an offering to them (BSS 2.9,10), in the daily agnihotra (SB 2.3.1.19, BSS 3.6), and in the monthly piṇḍapitṛ yajña (SB 2.4.2.16, SSS 4.3.1, ApSS 1.7.1).[82] Recollection of the pitṛs was also incorporated within the less complicated gṛhya rituals (SGS 4.1.1).[83] Besides, they were invoked in the daily pañcamahāyajñas (SB 11.5.6.1, PGS 2.9.9, BDS 2.3.5.4). The invocation of the pitṛs on virtually every ritual occasion was accompanied by the extension of the "right" to worship them to every social category, including śūdras (VDS 2.7).

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[82] Besides, as noted earlier (Chapter II), the pitṛs were invoked during the soma sacrifice and its variants and during the sākamedha (SB 2.6.1.1, SSS 3.16.1).

[83] For instance, the performance of the śrāddha was recommended during the new moon or whenever suitable conditions were available (GDS 15.1).

The repeated invocation of the pitṛs would have conveyed the message that they, unlike other kinsmen and women, were socially and ritually important.[84] Moreover, as suggested earlier (Chapter II), the emphasis on such connections may have been a means of legitimately claiming access to productive resources, which was acquiring greater significance during the period under consideration.

Simultaneously, the father-son bond was strengthened through the agnihotra (SB 2.3.4.41), which was viewed as a means of ensuring that the son carried on his father's vīrya or valorous acts, and through the new and full moon sacrifice (SB 1.9.3.21, ApSS 4.16.4).[85] Even when the sacrificial cult declined in importance, the communication of sacral knowledge was occasionally restricted to the son (SB 1.6.2.4). Besides, saṁskāras such as the jātakarman or the ritual relating to birth established patrilineal claims to the infant son, as noted earlier (Section III, AGS 1.15.1). Other saṁskāras would have underscored their common relationship to the sacred--as we have seen, these could be performed with chants for sons but not for daughters. As such, the fact that the father and the son shared a more or less identical access to the sacred, with its potential for extension to other realms as well, would have been reiterated.[86]

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[84] For brāhmaṇas in particular, access to the sacrifice was also determined on the ability to claim connection with a pravara or gotra.

[85] Sattras were also regarded as a means of ensuring that fathers and sons supported one another during different stages of their lives (SB 12.2.3.4).

[86] The connection between father and son, moreover, was viewed as synonymous with or symbolic of immortality (AB 7.33.1, BDS 2.9.16.6 VDS 17.2), which was often graphically defined in terms of the continuity of the patrilineage (e.g., SSS 15.17.1). Here, the pati was supposed to enter the jāyā and become the garbha or embryo which was reborn as the son. Elsewhere (BAU 1.5.16), the son was equated with brahma, yajña, and this loka or world.

In other words, ritual associations probably socialised men who were linked patrilineally into a belief in their own power, to the exclusion of other kinsfolk.

While some kinship ties were reiterated and reinforced through rituals, others, especially same generational ones, were scarcely recognised. These included ties amongst brothers, which were viewed as of marginal importance.[87]

Among the relationships which were explicitly denied in the sacrificial context was jāmitva. Apart from the enjoined avoidance of sāmeness as unproductive, referred to earlier, a myth narrated in connection with the soma sacrifice justified the exclusion of the jāmi, who was replaced by the patnī (AB 3.13.13).[88] This was probably related to the need to emphasise wifehood as the sole legitimate kinship role open to women.

Some kinship bonds were, moreover, ritually destroyed. These included those with the bhrātṛvya and sapatna, whose destruction was envisaged through the agnyādheya (SB 2.1.2.17), the agnihotra (SB 2.3.4.21, BSS 3.8), and the new and full moon sacrifice and its variants (SB 1.6.4.19, BSS 23.17). The nature of the rivalry between the bhrātṛvya and the sapatna on the one hand and the yajamāna on the other has been referred to earlier (Chapter II). What is significant is that with the consolidation of gārhasthya, relationships between more or less identical kinsmen, who were potential competitors in a situation of growing socio-political differentiation,

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[87] Occasionally, the participants in sacrifices such as the rāsi-marāya were expected to be brothers (SSS 14.39.7).

[88] In this context, Rākā is supposed to have claimed the pūrvapeya or the first drink on account of her jāmitva with the devas, but was overruled in favour of the patnīs.

seem to have lost their significance. Hence, these were not viewed as issues of concern in the context of saṁskāras or in the context of domestic rituals.

Other kinsfolk were accorded an ambiguous role in the ritual. These included the yonisambandhas, jñātis, and bandhus, the relatively undifferentiated body of kinsfolk (Section II) who were expected to participate in the inauspicious ritual of excommunication (GDS 20.2, BDS 2.1.1.35, VDS 15.12,13).[89]

The ordering of kinship ties is also evident in the treatment following death accorded to sapiṇḍas on the one hand and sambandhas or yonisambandhas on the other. The former constituted the core of the patrilineage, comprising of the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather on the one hand, and the son, grandson and the great-grandson on the other (BDS 1.5.11.7), while the latter included kinsfolk with whom relationships were not so clearly structured. Although a period of ritual impurity was prescribed for both categories of relatives (ADS 2.6.15.2), it was longer for the former than for the latter (GDS 14.19). The observance of varying periods of mourning would have conveyed a succinct message regarding the relative significance of both categories of kinsfolk.

Despite the insistence on the maintenance of sacral norms and the performance of sacral activities, there are indications that not all men conformed to this pattern. This is suggested by the

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[89]The inauspicious nature of the ritual is evident from the fact that a slave (dāsa), a son belonging to a wife of a different varṇa, a bandhu who was not virtuous, a broken pot, and the left foot were used in such rituals. Besides, terms such as brahma-bandhu (CU 6.1.1) and rājaṅyabandhu (SB 11.6.2.5) were indicative of contempt.

assurance of victory to the āhitāgni (the man who had established his sacrificial fires) vis-a-vis the anāhitāgni (the man who had not done so, SB 2.2.2.14), which would have been relevant only if both categories existed. Besides, the man who could offer the agnihotra but did not do so was threatened with dire consequences (AB 5.25.5).[90] The existence of men who sacrificed for women was similarly recognised and condemned (GDS 15.15). The possibility of non-performance was also recognised in the case of the saṁskāras, evident from references to men who were not initiated and who were consequently debarred from social intercourse (ADS 1.1.1.33, VDS 11.75), as well as from the recognition of the possibility of a man being ignorant of whether his ancestors were initiated or not (ADS 1.1.2.5).[91]

Resistance to the process of socialisation, implicit in the recognition of the existence of non-conforming men, is also evident in the recognition of alternative definitions of the nature and possible roles of women. These included the conceptualisation of menstruation as a potentially purifying act (BDS 2.2.4.4, VDS 28.4) which was thought to be capable of removing the evils incurred through leaving home, getting raped or abducted, and in the view that women were free from sin (akalmasā) owing to the attributes conferred on them by Soma, the gandharvas, and Agni (BDS 2.2.4.5,

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[90] This was generalised into a prescription (e.g., VDS 8.9-11) that men who could perform the agnyādheya, agnihotra, and soma sacrifice, ought to do so.

[91] At another level, the fact that the agnihotra and ātithya had to be specifically prescribed as duties for the householder (ADS 1.4.14.1) points to the possibility of their not having been performed routinely.

VDS 28.6), the very deities who were associated with "giving" women in marriage. What is remarkable is that such notions implied a virtual reversal of the norms inculcated through rituals, their existence and incorporation within the brahmanical tradition pointing to the limits of socialisation.

At another level, the recognition of the wife as potentially dangerous is significant. This is reflected in the marriage ritual, which contained prayers to destroy whatever was patighnī, prajāghnī, paśughnī, and gṛhaghnī (destructive of the husband, offspring, cattle and the household respectively) in the bride (SGS 1.18.3, PGS 1.11.2). The existence of recalcitrant women is also suggested by the provision for abandoning the wife who spoke unpleasantly (BDS 2.2.4.6) as also from the enumeration of various types of hostility which wives could display, ranging from mental hostility to attempts to murder (VDS 21.6-11). An attempt was made to cope with the situation by assuring faithful wives of a share in the world attained by their husbands, while unfaithful women were threatened with rebirth as jackals (ibid.:21.14-15). The development of such promises and threats would have been important only in a situation where actually or potentially troublesome women existed.

The inability to socialise men and women into a complete acceptance of the brahmanical ideal was also reflected in various compromises arrived at in the domestic context. For instance, although women were denied the right to sacrifice (ADS 2.6.15.17), limited rights in this respect were recognised within the gṛhya tradition (KGS 1.5.17). Besides, the wives of the pitṛs were accorded recognition within the domestic ritual (PGS 3.3.11). The offering of funerary oblations to other kinswomen was also grudgingly

permitted (BDS 1.5.11.5). Rituals devised by women were also recognised in the context of marriage (ApGS 2.15).[92]

It is evident then that a wide range of rituals were employed to socialise women and men into the norms and ideals expected in the typical household. As far as kinswomen were concerned, such rituals emphasised their procreative or sexual roles, which were viewed as ambiguous. This was extended to creating a hierarchy between men and women in other spheres as well, and to developing the notion of the centrality of a particular form of wifehood as opposed to other possibilities. The ties envisaged amongst kinsmen were different--these were viewed as supportive amongst men of different generations, but tension-ridden amongst those belonging to the same generation.

There is, at the same time, evidence that despite the prescribed use of a range of devices to communicate messages regarding kinship ties regularly through daily and fortnightly rituals as well as through those associated with important turning-points in the life-cycle, not everybody accepted the message conveyed. As noted above, this is clear from references to men and women who deviated from the norms, and provisions for dealing with them. The existence of such challenges points to the difficulties in enforcing the pattern of gārhasthya. Nevertheless, the pattern was, we have suggested, valuable for men who were aspiring to political or ritual power as well as for those who were attempting to establish dominance within the grha. Hence, efforts were made to establish

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[92] This may have been part of the grāmadharma and jānapada-dharma, i.e., the practice of the village or the region (AGS 1.7.1, PGS 1.8.13).

and reiterate connections amongst such men, to ensure that one supported the other. While examples of this have been discussed earlier, we will explore these further, focusing on their significance in the concluding section.

V

The establishment of gārhasthya as an ideal was, as we have seen, a complex process. This involved the undermining of alternative, less structured household arrangements. Related to the above, it necessitated focusing on certain kinship ties which could be regulated to ensure the consolidation of resources on the one hand and their restricted transmission on the other. As we have seen, this involved an emphasis on patriliny and gender stratification, and a denial or marginalisation of alternative kinship ties. Carried to its logical conclusion, this enabled the grhapati to convert kinswomen into procreative resources and to assert his unilateral control over other material resources, extending this to their legitimate transmission, both to kinsmen and to those who were emerging into political or ritual dominance.

Gārhasthya required, however, the socialisation of men and women into certain restricted, well-defined roles. As we have seen, although this was attempted through a range of rituals, it remained problematic, and dissidence, overt and covert, was recognized. Besides, attempts were made to confront dissidents and bring them within the fold or punish them.

The strenuous attempts to uphold gārhasthya, implicit in the range of rituals used to bolster it, suggest, however, that developing and maintaining the institution was not only important for the grhapati but was necessary for others as well. This is reflected, to an extent, in the location of gārhasthya within the framework of the āśramas (e.g., GDS 3.2,3).

The āśramas, often viewed as stages in the life of a man belonging to the first three varṇas, were distinguished from one

another on the basis of different modes of sacral activity, including acquiring sacred learning in the context of a distinct life style, the ritual centring on the household, and less or more severe forms of asceticism. While these were ideally correlated with chronological and/or social divisions in a man's life, possibilities of variations were recognised.

Although the grhastha was grouped along with other āśramas, it was, at the same time, perceived as distinct from the others (e.g., GDS 3.36, VDS 8.15). This distinctness was basically related to the fact that the other āśramas were directly, and in some cases solely associated with sacral activities, whereas in the case of gārhasthya, these were clearly only a part of the grhapati's functions. Despite this difference, gārhasthya was frequently viewed as superior to other āśramas (ibid.). What is more, this superiority was attributed to the procreative nature of the institution. Besides, as we have seen (Section IV), procreation in the context of the grha was elevated to a sacred act. In other words, the very maintenance of the grha was upheld vis-a-vis other forms of sacral activity on the one hand, and other household forms on the other.

The importance assigned to maintaining the grha is thus obvious. As implied in much of the preceding discussion, this was attempted through developing ties between the grhapati and the priesthood on the one hand and the grhapati and the rājā on the other. The former bond was developed through a number of mechanisms. These included the provision for the participation of priests in household rituals, both sacrifices and saṁskāras. While it is obvious that bonds between the priest and the yajamāna/grhapati were established on such occasions, cemented through the receiving and giving of dakṣiṇā

and dāna, they were also implicit on occasions when priests were not present, it being recognised that the gṛhapati could officiate as a priest (e.g., AGS 1.3.6).[93]

At another level, attempts were made to integrate brāhmaṇas, especially the ācārya or teacher, within the patrilineage. This is implicit in the notion of brāhmaṇas possessing two kinds of progeny (BDS 1.11.21.15)--those produced through retas or sperm and those produced through the imparting of sacred learning. As noted earlier, teachers and pupils were recognised as substitutes in the absence of patrilineal kinsmen in the context of dāyabhāga and for the performance of rituals.

The ties which were developed between the rājā and the gṛhapati were, in a sense, less direct. This was, to an extent, inevitable, given the unique nature of the rājā's position and the sheer physical constraints in terms of communications and resources in attempting to establish contact with individual gṛhapatis. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the potential for, and the legitimacy of direct contact was continuously recognised in the importance assigned to ātithya.

What was, however, more significant, was the development of the notion of the rājā's position and roles running parallel to those of the gṛhapati, this being extended to implicit or explicit

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[93]This was accompanied, as noted earlier, by the brahmanisation of saṁskāras. For instance, the bride was made to sit before the fire in a brāhmaṇa's house during the marriage ritual (KGS 1.4.2). Besides, during the simantonnayana, prescriptions of elderly brāhmaṇa women whose husband and children were alive, were recognised (AGS 1.7.21, 1.14.8).

identity on a number of ritual occasions.[94] The parallels between the rājā and the gṛhapati were implicit in the sacrificial context. Both could participate in rituals (of varying magnitude, it is true), after performing the dīkṣā or initiation, being reborn through a "pure", non-physical process, whose implications have been noted earlier.[95] We have also seen how the focus on structuring procreation and the related emphasis on controlling and manipulating the wife was common to both kinds of rituals. Besides, references to and strengthening of patrilineal ties were recognised as important at both levels. This was accompanied by a common emphasis on destroying the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna. In other words, both the rājā and the gṛhapati were envisaged as functioning within an identical kinship unit, and in an identical fashion.

This implicit similarity was worked out through an identification of the goals of household rituals such as the agnyādheya, agnihotra, and new and full moon sacrifice on the one hand and the aśvamedha on the other, often related to an identification with the divine rājā or śreṣṭha. In the later prescriptive literature, moreover, the rājā was expected to perform the rituals associated with gārhasthya, appointing a purohita for the purpose (VDS 19.3). Such connections were extended to the saṁskāras through the device

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[94] In a different context, Kertzer (1988:211) argues that symbolic identifications are important for integrating local with national concerns. Such an integration was clearly envisaged within the brahmanical tradition.

[95] Dīkṣā was, at the same time, symbolic of the association between the yajamāna and prestigious or sacral realms, connected as it was with notions of ecstasy, divinity, mystical generation and death, purification, and strengthening of cosmic processes (White 1971:173).

of using the jaya verses, as well as through the invocation of gods who were regarded as powerful, details of which have been discussed earlier (Section IV).

The emphasis on the identity of the rājā and the gṛhapati was clearly politically significant. At one level, the importance of this connection in legitimating rājya cannot be overestimated. As suggested earlier, it permitted the incorporation of the values associated with rājya within each household. As we have seen, this was particularly important in a situation where large-scale sacrifices such as the rājasūya were no longer feasible, and in a situation where rājya itself was being increasingly defined in terms of Indraic rather than Varuṇic or Somic possibilities.

Underlying this broad concern with legitimation was a more specific social understanding. This is evident when one considers the attention paid to defining the gṛha as the sole legitimate household pattern, associated with a definite type of control over produce and reproductive resources. We had argued that the focus on the gṛha, with its hierarchically ordered kinship structure, was both politically and economically significant from the point of view of the rājā, providing a basis for incorporating and justifying notions of hierarchy within a framework of day-to-day existence, and for acquiring material support in the form of hospitality, tribute or taxes.

The identity with the rājā was also valuable for the gṛhapati. On the one hand, it conferred prestige on him. More concretely, it helped him consolidate his position vis-a-vis his kinsfolk and the resources of the kin group. At another level, the rājā, with his recognised duty of upholding āśrama dharma (e.g., GDS 11.9), may have offered tangible support to the gṛhapati.

As in the case of varṇadharma, the upholding of āśramadharma by the rājā was selective. Thus, the rājā was only vaguely associated with ensuring the proper functioning of brahmacarya, vānaprastha or saṅyāsa. The area of central concern was with gārhasthya, and within gārhasthya, with the norms pertaining to sexual relations in general and to redressing violations of the property rights of men vis-a-vis women in particular (ADS 2.10.27.9, GDS 12.2,3, BDS 2.2.3.53, VDS 21.1-5). Given the attention focused on socialising women into wifehood and the possibility that this was resisted, it is likely that the support of the rājā in this respect was particularly valuable.

The mutual relationship of the rājā and the gṛhapati had other implications as well. For instance, the dependence of the rājā on the gṛha meant that certain possibilities, initially associated with rājya, were viewed as irrelevant or even potentially disruptive. We have seen how the nature of rājya changes substantially during the period under consideration, with the rājā assuming a more appropriative relationship vis-a-vis produce or productive resources, besides intervening in a range of social conflicts. Such interventions strengthened processes of socio-political differentiation, although these processes may have initially been relatively autonomous. As noted earlier, the intervention of the rājā in social relations was a means of winning social support. At the same time, such support could have been offered only by those who were relatively powerful. The gṛhapati was one such man. Hence his support was sought and obtained. This entailed, as noted above, the establishment of a sense of identity between the rājā and the gṛhapati. While this was obviously useful, it at the same time constricted the definition

of rājya in terms of a single, hierarchically ordered kinship or household pattern.

What is significant is that this kinship or household pattern had little to do with the earliest, typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma. Neither of these deities was conceived of as patriarchs or as heads of the household. Besides, their role in mythical explorations of the battle of the sexes, was, as noted earlier, marginal. Their ambiguous role in mythical or ritual battles against kinsmen such as the bhrātṛvya and the sapatna has also been referred to earlier. If these associations had parallels in the human context, they would suggest that initially, the rājā had little to do with the perpetuation or maintenance of a stratified, hierarchically ordered household.

The taking on of the latter role by the rājā therefore involved a fundamental change in the very nature of rājya itself. In other words, not only was the support of the gṛhapati crucial for the rājā, but, in the process of striving to obtain this support, the rājā took on new social roles and abandoned earlier ones. Thus, the rājya which emerged through the support of the gṛhapati was one in which the imprint of the latter was clearly visible.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE END AND THE BEGINNING OF RĀJYA

> In my janapada there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man who has not installed the sacrificial fire, no ignorant man, no adulterer; how can there be an adulteress?
>
> Aśvapati Kaikeya

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the origin and development of the institution of rājya in north India (c. 8th to 4th centuries B.C.), and its acceptance, was a complex process. A number of more or less closely related developments provided the underpinning for the emergence of monarchy, and, at the same time, determined the nature and outcome of the process. These developments were reflected, to a great extent, in changes discernible within the brahmanical tradition. These changes are evident in myths, in the attributes ascribed to deities and the significance assigned to them, exemplified, for instance, in the shifting importance of Varuṇa, who was initially conceived of as a typical rājā, and Indra and Prajāpati, who were regarded as śresthas, but whose attributes were increasingly viewed as ideal for the human rājā in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently. At another level, they are reflected in the development of a range of rituals, such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya, which provided occasions for defining rājya, and in the tendency to reinforce the values associated with these sacrifices through domestic rituals and rites of passage. The attempt to devise and enforce non-ritual,

universalistic prescriptions also reflects both a changing definition of rulership and some of the circumstances underlying this change.

It is evident that the changes reflected in the brahmanical tradition relate to two inter-related developments--the emergence of a single, composite definition of political power and authority, typified in the virtually exclusive use of the term rājā for a man occupying the highest position in society, and growing interaction among relatively independent communities, which resulted in increasing socio-economic differentiation both within and among them. The latter development provided, as we have seen, the context for the former. The relationship between the two processes was, moreover dynamic, with each influencing and reinforcing the other in a variety of ways.

The development of a composite definition of rulership is evident at a number of levels. It is exemplified in the existence of a number of terms indicative of leadership, such as śreṣṭha, adhipati virāj, svarāj, and rājā, which were assimilated to one another in the later Vedic tradition. In the process, some of the distinctive features associated with specific types of leadership were abandoned or marginalised, whereas others were accorded central importance.

To start with, the units or categories in terms of which the exercise of rulership was envisaged reflect a range of possibilities. In the case of the śreṣṭha, for instance, the category over which his dominance was asserted was conceived of as his kinsfolk, or equals, as is evident from the attributes associated with the divine śreṣṭha Indra and his human counterpart. At the same time, an alternative possibility of limitless expansion was conceptualised through the characterisation of the other deity associated with śraiṣṭhya,

Prajāpati, although its practical realisation was clearly impossible. The incorporation of such diverse definitions was probably a means of reconciling notions which had developed in the context of distinct communities, and helped to synthesise specific definitions of rulership. This possibility is strengthened when one considers the divergent economic and social roles ascribed to Indra and Prajāpati, referred to earlier (Chapter II). Such a fusion of diverse possibilities was useful for men who were aspiring to establish contact with or assert control over more than one community, each associated with distinct norms or values.

The categories in terms of which adhipatya was defined explored other possibilities, with the adhipati being conceived of as exercising control over specific social categories, often defined in terms of varṇa. As opposed to this, vairājya was not associated with any notion of control or dominance (Chapter III). In the case of the rājā, there is evidence for a systematic attempt to increase the number of groups incorporated within his sphere of influence, reflected in variations in the formulae used to proclaim his status on ritual occasions such as the rājasūya or aśvamedha, which referred to the rājā in terms of a single viś, or, alternatively, numerous people (Chapter IV). Given the fact that the existence of different kinds of viś was recognised, as for instance in the pāriplava cycle of the aśvamedha (Chapter V), the attempt to widen the sphere of influence associated with the rājā is obvious. This is also reflected in the attempt to identify the rājā with other kinds of rulers such as the adhipati, virāj, and svarāj in rituals like the aindramahābhiṣeka, for instance (Chapter VI), as well as in the use of each of these titles for a range of deities, examples of which

have been noted earlier (Chapters II-IV). In effect, a systematic effort was made to arrive at a single definition of rulership which was intrinsically linked to the consolidation of power. This in turn resulted in a marginalisation of the definition of rājya associated with deities such as Varuṇa and Soma, a definition which was relatively less exploitative and more benevolent. Thus, the definition of rājya was transformed substantially, with earlier economic and social roles being abandoned or modified, while newer ones were recognised and legitimised at a variety of levels.

The process of extending and intensifying control, evident in the attempt to incorporate different peoples within the institution of rājya, was accompanied by a changing relationship with what were defined as the bases of material well-being--productive and procreative resources. This was typified in two, related developments: on the one hand, the role of the ruler or chief in distribution, both conditional and unconditional, was regulated if not negated, while on the other, the notion of the ruler as an exploiter was both elaborated and legitimised. These developments are evident in the context of śraiṣṭhya, where notions of generosity associated with the divine śreṣṭhas Indra and Prajāpati were not extended to the human situation. What is more, the soma sacrifice, which legitimated śraiṣṭhya in the human context, was used as an occasion for appropriating resources from the community and for distributing them assymetrically. This is reflected in the importance attached to dakṣiṇā, which accrued to the priests. While the giving of dakṣiṇā enabled the donor to convert material resources into social prestige, the transfer of wealth to the priest, who was under no social compulsion to part with it, contained possibilities for the concentration of wealth in the hands of a specific social category.

As opposed to this, other participants in the ritual were probably entertained at a common feast, and thus had no access to productive resources in the sacrificial context. As noted earlier, this meant that the very process whereby śraiṣṭhya was legitimated reinforced processes of socio-economic differentiation (Chapter II). Given the fact that variations of the soma sacrifice were used to legitimise ādhipatya and svārājya (Chapter III) and were incorporated within the rituals which legitimated rājya (Chapter VI), it is clear that a specific definition of the ruler's role in distributive processes was universalised. Besides, the fact that the sacrifices which legitimated ādhipatya, svārājya, or rājya were much more elaborate than the basic soma sacrifice meant that their performance would have had a greater social and economic impact than the performance of the relatively simple paradigmatic ritual.

At the same time, alternative possibilities of distribution, evident in the definition of vairājya (Chapter III) or the conceptualisation of the divine rājā Soma (Chapter IV), which emphasised unconditional, total, virtually self-effacing generosity, were either manipulated or absorbed within a new context, or negated, as were personnel involved in alternative patterns of distribution such as the bhāgadugha, who was probably associated with distributing shares, and the akṣavāpa, who was in charge of dicing and the consequent redistribution of wealth. The contrast is evident when one compares Soma rājā, regarded as food for his fellow divinities, with his human counterpart, the typical eater of the viś. In other words, the context within which people participating in different networks of distribution were brought together privileged forms of distribution which were assymetrical at the expense of other, less exploitative patterns.

The development of a more exploitative relationship vis-a-vis the distribution of produce or productive resources was justified implicitly, and occasionally explicitly, through the attempt to arrive at a single definition of cosmogonic processes, which were conceived of as providing the context for human existence. This definition related such processes to Prajāpati (Chapter II), who, more often than not, was thought to have created the universe through a sacrifice. The conceptualisation of the sacrifice or specific types of rituals as cosmogonically significant meant, in effect, that the men who could perform or get such rituals performed were recognised as equal to Prajāpati, and thus divinised. Besides, they were thought to be responsible for ensuring general well-being, and could thus claim a share in it. As we have seen, such associations were developed for the śreṣṭha, adhipati, svarāj, and rājā on the human plane in the later Vedic tradition through assigning a cosmogonic significance to the soma sacrifice and rituals such as the rājasūya. This focus on the cosmogonic sacrifice(s), moreover, resulted in the marginalisation of alternative cosmogonic speculations, associated with Indra, who was conceived of as creating through his valour, Varuṇa, whose cosmogonic role was linked to māyā, and the virāj and Soma, who were associated with creation through heterosexual intercourse.(Chapters II-IV). The attempt to establish and reinforce the notion of a single form of cosmogonic activity meant that men who could mime it were accorded or could claim a unique socio-political status. As opposed to this, other men (and women) could be portrayed as less relevant to processes of production and could hence be legitimately denied access to resources or produce, or at least deprived of a part of what they produced through less exalted means.

The reduction of the range of permissible cosmogonic speculation also meant that alternative understandings of cosmogonic processes were gradually rendered less available, and that the perceptions or values of some communities were probably marginalised. This in turn facilitated the homogenisation and incorporation of different peoples within the scope of a single, all-encompassing political framework.

While the propagation of a specific cosmogonic understanding may have theoretically justified a claim to everything by those who could recreate cosmogonic acts, this was a possibility which could not be realised in practice. As much is apparent from the focus on specific produce such as paśu or anna, whose acquisition was emphasised for the śreṣṭha (Chapter II), or the wider but none the less finite range of produce or resources associated with the rājā (Chapter IV). In practice, any attempt to claim the totality of produce or resources would have entailed the dispossession of the viś or common people, which was, significantly enough, not envisaged as a possibility even within the ritual context. Here, while efforts were made to appropriate the resources of the viś, it was implicitly recognised that such efforts could be counter-productive, evident in the fear that the viś might desert the kṣatra. The relative independence of the vaiśya is also evident from his characteristic prosperity which rested on an ability to control and channelise the flow of economic resources through networks of exchange, including trade, which were relatively independent of political or ritual regulation (Chapter VII). Hence, although the human śreṣṭha, adhipati, svarāj, and rājā could potentially claim control over all productive resources, this was effectively limited by practical exigencies.

The consolidation of political authority was also accompanied by an attempt to regulate access to women who were increasingly defined as instruments of procreation. As in the case of cosmogonies, the attempt to enforce this definition is reflected in the restrictions imposed on the range of mythical speculation regarding procreation. This is evident in the marginalisation of Varuṇa, a deity who was conceived of as less masculine, and the growing emphasis on the attributes of masculinity associated with Indra and Agni, the divine śreṣṭha and adhipati respectively. In other words, later Vedic mythology tended to define procreation as a male-dominated activity. More significantly, the treatment of women as instruments of procreation is evident in the growing emphasis on non-physical processes, such as sacrifices, which were envisaged as procreative devices. This ritualisation of procreation was effected through the use of mithunas or heterosexual pairs of objects, ideas, verses, etc. in the sacrifice, as well as through the creation of alternative, non-physical "births" through the dīkṣā or initiation for the sacrifice, and the upanayana, which broadly coincided with male puberty. Such ritualisations are evident both in the soma sacrifice as well as, with modifications, in the rājasūya and aśvamedha, and in the domestic ritual.

As in the case of access to productive resources, the ritualisation of procreation in the context of the sacrifices associated with śraiṣṭhya or rājya did not imply control over all women or all offspring. However, it provided a basis for asserting the importance of the yajamāna who was thought to ensure procreation. Besides, it provided a means of cementing bonds amongst men of different social categories, about which more later.

If the association developed between the ruler and the material basis of society points to a tendency to focus on some possibilities to the exclusion of others, a similar tendency is discernible in the role envisaged for the ruler vis-a-vis socio-political issues. In a sense, the two roles were interwoven, as the attempts to claim resources or produce more or less exclusively were linked to their appropriation. This was probably resisted, and while such resistance could be crushed, this was a short-term solution. In the long run, the search for or the creation of alternative bases of social support acquired importance. In the process, rulers tended to ally with specific social categories against others. As we have seen, in order to be concretised, such alliances required to be constantly worked out in terms of the sharing of power and/or resources.

We had observed that there were three areas of social concern which had acquired significance during the period under consideration (Chapter I). These related to varṇa and the issue of the role of men of various varṇas towards one another as well as that of rulers vis-a-vis the order, the kinship structure, where there is evidence for conflict between patrilineal and non-patrilineal tendencies, and, related to the above, gender stratification. What is noteworthy is that just as there was a tendency to coalesce or order or marginalise different possible roles for rulers in terms of the control of material resources, so also there was a tendency to arrive at a more or less identical definition of the social role of the ruler. This definition emphasised support for a stratified social order in general, and of powerful social categories within that order in particular. At the same time, alternative roles were abandoned or portrayed as disruptive. Once again, the norms or possibilities

which were developed in the context of some communities were probably privileged at the expense of others.

Turning to specific social issues, we find that the notion of varṇa as one amongst a number of means of ordering social relations acquired centrality during the later Vedic phase (Chapter VII). While the hierarchy itself probably emerged as a result of differentiation within and amongst different communities, its development posed certain problems and opened up new possibilities for the leaders or rulers of such communities. On the one hand, members of specific varṇas could, and evidently did claim access to some forms of power, ritual in the case of the brāhmaṇas and economic in the case of the vaiśya, and probably the śūdra as well. As a result, any attempt of the rulers to monopolise all forms of power was, in effect, constantly checked. At the same time, the emergence of such powerful social categories created the possibility of allying with them and provided the basis for developing new networks of support.

Both tendencies are reflected in the brahmanical tradition. The former is evident, for instance, in the treatment of the term kṣatra. While the term itself had connotations of universal power (Chapter V), and was typically an attribute associated with virtually all categories of rulers (Chapters II, III, V), it was gradually restricted to mean a member of the second varṇa category. This meant that the claims of the kṣatriya tc universal power were curtailed. This restricted definition was then extended to elaborate discussions on the rcle of the ruler vis-a-vis the brāhmaṇa on the one hand and the viś or vaiśya on the other.

Each of these relationships was characterised by an inherent tension in the later Vedic tradition. This is reflected in myths relating to both Indra and Varuṇa, who were conceived of as accepting the authority of deities representing brahma, Agni and Mitra, or of challenging them more or less effectively (Chapters II, V). As suggested earlier (Chapters V,VII), such tensions were probably related to attempts to define separate spheres of influence by members of each of these categories and the practical difficulties of the process. At another level, this was reflected in the discussion on the relative importance of the brahma and kṣatra, or, more concretely, the purohita and the rājā in rituals and prescriptions. As we have seen, although the discussion was theoretically resolved in favour of the priestly category, not surprising given the brahmanical bias of our sources, there are indications that in reality, the brāhmaṇa may have accepted a degree of subordination, as he was dependent on the material and social support offered by the ruler. The latter in turn was dependent on the former for the performance of sacrifices, which provided occasions for acquiring resources, and for communicating information regarding the power and status of the ruler, simultaneously sacralising such information. This was later extended to a dependence on the interventions of the priesthood in the household ritual which communicated definitions of power and legitimated the authority of the rājā on a day-to-day basis (Chapter VI).

The kṣatra-viś relationship underwent, in a sense, a more fundamental transformation. This is reflected in myths, where the relationship between Indra and the Maruts, regarded as representatives of the kṣatra and the viś respectively, was envisaged as harmonious

in the early Vedic tradition, but was perceived as visibly strained in the later Vedic context. As noted earlier, this was characterised by an attempt on the part of the kṣatra to systematically dominate the viś, reflected in a range of rituals such as the soma sacrifice, the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and household sacrifices, and in the notion of the viś as food for the kṣatra, which replaced the earlier claims of the viś to a share of the spoils acquired by the kṣatra (Chapter VII). Simultaneously, and understandably enough, fears that the viś might desert the kṣatra were expressed repeatedly. Such tensions were in a sense reflective of the transitional situation outlined earlier, in which pre-existing intra-community bonds were subjected to considerable stress. Hence it is not surprising to find that institutions such as the vidatha, which probably served to maintain these bonds, were virtually eliminated (Chapter V). As communities became increasingly differentiated, earlier, relatively egalitarian bonds between leader and led gave way to a more complex network of political ties, where on the one hand, prosperous members of the community, typified by the grāmaṇī, were accorded a significant role in political processes, enabling the rājā to acquire economic resources and prestige, whereas other members were subjected to more or less systematic exploitation.

What is also significant is that while the typical divine rājās, Varuṇa and Soma, were occasionally conceived of as protagonists in the brahma-kṣatra conflict, they were rarely associated with the kṣatra-viś relationship. On the other hand, Indra, the typical divine śreṣṭha, was accorded a role in both relationships in later Vedic mythology. It was the understanding associated with Indra, moreover, which was systematically reiterated in later Vedic rituals meant for human rulers such as the adhipati, svarāj, and

rājā, through the soma sacrifice and its variants. Thus, just as in the case of the association with material resources, new possibilities were explored for the human rājā in the later Vedic context in connection with the varṇa hierarchy, possibilities which had little or no connection with the social role of the early Vedic rājā as reflected in the conceptualisation of Varuṇa and Soma.

The tendency to ascribe new roles to the human rājā is, if anything, even more striking in the context of the ties amongst kinsmen. Here there is evidence for two inter-related developments in the later Vedic tradition--one, a perception of same-generational kinsmen, typified by the bhrātṛvya and sapatna, as rivals, from whom wealth and access to the ritual had to be ideally appropriated, and secondly, an attempt to reinforce patrilineal ties between father and son, as well as between the sacrificer and his pitṛs or patrilineal ancestors.

The first development was reflected in a substantial reworking of early Vedic mythology, evidenced in the treatment of the Indra-Vṛtra conflict, and the development of the notion of the devas and asuras as antagonistic. As we have seen (Chapter II), while Vṛtra was viewed as a representative of unmitigated evil in the early Vedic tradition, the destruction of Vṛtra acquired a certain ambiguity in the later Vedic tradition. At the same time, the divine rājā Soma, and, to a lesser extent Varuṇa, were equated explicitly or implicitly with Vṛtra (Chapter V). At another level, later Vedic rituals constantly equated the killing of Vṛtra or the asuras with the destruction of the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna. This was, moreover, recognised as a legitimate goal in sacrifices ranging from the agniṣṭoma to the rājasūya and aśvamedha, and domestic

rituals. As such, it is evident that the assertion of control over same-generational kinsmen was an integral part of the definition of rulership which was emerging. That the attitude towards such assertions was nonetheless ambivalent reflects the tensions inherent in the destruction or devaluation of certain kinship ties, at one level, and of the destruction or marginalisation of the values associated with the early rājā at another. Clearly, the process could not be viewed or portrayed as entirely beneficial.

It is likely that the ties amongst same-generation kinsmen were based on reciprocity or the sharing of resources. As opposed to this, patrilineal ties, which were positively valorised, through later Vedic myths such as those associated with Prajāpati, the divine śreṣṭha, and rituals, permitted the consolidation of resources, and, by extension, power, through their transfer from one generation to the next. Hence, it is not surprising that such connections were reiterated on a number of ritual occasions. These emphasised the father-son bond as one of mutual support in different stages of the life-cycle. Once again, the role of Varuṇa and Soma was marginal, if not negative, in such conceptualisations--Varuṇa was, in fact, known by the metronymic Āditya, whereas Soma was only occasionally conceived of in patrilineal terms. As suggested earlier (Chapter V), this probably indicates that the early Vedic rājā was less dependent on patriliny as a basis for claiming access to power or social support.

The concern with patriliny, as well as the definition of women as procreative resources, referred to earlier, was accompanied by the beginning of systematic attempts to structure gender relations. While some of these possibilities were explored even in early Vedic

mythology, typified by the Indra-Uṣas conflict, these were more systematically developed in the later Vedic tradition, where myths associated with Prajāpati laid down the basis for differentiating between the sexes, while rituals and prescriptions delineated the ideal nature of gender relations at length. As we have seen, this was reflected in the attempts to define women as weak and passive, which was extended to the notion of women as objects to be given and received. This was accompanied by attempts to restrict the participation of women in non-procreative activities, and involved a denial of the exercise of political power by women. The relationship envisaged as ideal is typified in the use of the wives of the rājā as instruments of procreation in the aśvamedha, for instance, and in the simultaneous marginalisation of goddesses such as Aditi and Vāc, who were conceived of as associated with rājās or as exercising power as rājñīs or rāṣṭrīs in the early Vedic tradition. As noted earlier (Chapter V), the divine rājās were rarely associated with gender stratification, and this association, like other aspects of the social role envisaged for the rājā in the later Vedic tradition, was a new one. The incorporation of these roles within the definition of rājya was encapsulated in the notion of the rājā as the upholder of varṇāśrama dharma. As we have seen, this meant, in effect, the regulation of the access of men belonging to different varṇas to the sacred, and safeguarding the access of men to property and women (Chapter V).

The ascription of a new social role was not peculiar to the rājā in the later Vedic tradition, but extended to the adhipati and the svarāj as well. As noted earlier (Chapter III), the deities associated with such titles, such as Agni, had little or no intrinsic

role in the issues which were acquiring centrality. However, the use of variations of the soma sacrifice for legitimating the position of those who aspired to such titles on the human plane meant that a specific understanding of varṇa and kinship relationships would have been enforced and universalised. As opposed to this, titles such as virāj, which were associated with notions diametrically opposed to hierarchy, including possibilities of gender-neutral access to distributive or benevolent power, were marginalised.

It is evident that the social role envisaged for the ruler required a range of supportive mechanisms for its implementation. These included access to productive resources or produce, to mechanisms of coercion, and to means of communication and legitimation. Not surprisingly, the extent to which such mechanisms developed varied significantly for the different positions outlined earlier. While the rudiments of supportive institutions are discernible in the case of the śreṣṭha, these were developed at length in the context of rājya. The adhipati, virāj, and svarāj were not associated with such developments. As suggested earlier, this was probably due to the fact that the social role envisaged for the adhipati and svarāj was an artificial extension of that of the śreṣṭha, whereas the virāj was associated with a distinctive, non-hierarchical social role, and consequently with different mechanisms of support which did not survive in an increasingly stratified social context. The rājā's position was somewhat paradoxical--on the one hand, the social role of the later Vedic rājā was clearly distinct from that of his early Vedic counterpart. At the same time, the notions of benevolent sacrality associated with the divine rājās probably provided the basis for developing new mechanisms of support in general, and legitimation in particular, to an extent which was not possible in the context of śraiṣṭhya.

The differences amongst the categories referred to above become evident from an examination of the resources claimed and the basis on which such claims were justified. These included bali, which was claimed by both the śreṣṭha and the rājā (Chapters II, V). This was probably initially demanded in the sacrificial context or as hospitality. As we have seen, both the periodicity and the amount of the demand were left vague, and were in all likelihood determined on specific occasions after taking into consideration the relative strength of the kṣatra and the viś.

Hospitality or ātithya was particularly important for the rājā and provided a means of obtaining access to the resources of the household. Such occasions were probably important for non-economic reasons as well, providing, as they did, an occasion for establishing direct contact between ruler and ruled.

Although divine adhipatis or their associates were conceived of as receiving a bhāga or share in lieu of protection, their human counterpart could not claim such a share (Chapter III). We had suggested earlier that this was owing to the fact that the social role of the human adhipati was unlike that of his human counterpart. The human rājā, on the other hand, could and did claim a bhāga, often defined as one-sixth of the produce, which was justified on the basis of protection. Thus different forms of tribute which were probably initially associated with different possibilities of leadership, were gradually coalesced and consolidated within the framework of rājya. This was accompanied by the development and systematisation of relationships with the purohita in particular and the priesthood in general, and the grāmaṇī, and, to a lesser extent, the sūta, who evidently helped in the appropriation of resources, either directly, as in the case of the grāmaṇī or the sūta, or

indirectly, by creating ritual occasions for appropriation, or justifying appropriative relationships, as in the case of the priests.

A broadly similar tendency is evident in the development of coercive mechanisms, which were often conceived of as appropriative devices. Here, although the divine śreṣṭha Indra was typically associated with the vajra which he was thought to have used against Vṛtra, and which ought to have been available against the bhrātṛvya or the sapatna in the human context, the human śreṣṭha was evidently unable to develop effective means of coercion. On the other hand, the human rājā, despite his association with non-militaristic deities like Varuṇa and Soma, was able to develop such mechanisms, typified by his connection with the senānī and the chariot (Chapter VI). As we have seen, access to such mechanisms was very often explicitly linked to an ability to appropriate resources. Almost simultaneously, the rājā was associated with upholding social norms by coercing those who defied them through the use of the daṇḍa. Although the ability to administer daṇḍa was only beginning to be asserted during the period under consideration, the claim to use it rested on the association between the rājā and righteousness, and was valuable in legitimating his position.

As important was the development of mechanisms of communication which served to diffuse notions regarding the legitimacy of the exercise of power by the śreṣṭha or the rājā. While the mechanisms available to the śreṣṭha were relatively limited, consisting basically of the soma sacrifice which provided an occasion of explicating the values and norms associated with śraiṣṭhya, those which were developed in the context of rājya were fairly elaborate. These were established through the sūtas who probably acted as

intermediaries between the viś and the rājā and popularised the institution of rājya, and priests who not only created the elaborate ritual context associated with the rājasūya and aśvamedha which demonstrated the rājā's power through a range of visual and aural symbols, but, by penetrating within the household and establishing a bond between the grhapati and the rājā, permitted the legitimation of rājya on a day-to-day basis.

As is implicit from the above, the means whereby positions of status were legitimised varied considerably. Questions of legitimation were evidently unimportant in the early Vedic tradition, where the differences between the leaders and led were probably relatively less sharp. Even in the later Vedic tradition, the problem of legitimation did not arise in the context of vairājya, which is not surprising, given the fact that the virāj was not conceived of as asserting dominance or control over others. However, legitimation was of crucial significance for the śreṣṭha and, to a lesser extent, for the adhipati and the svarāj. It also became an issue of central importance for the new rājā, who was assuming a partisan role in a situation of social differentiation, and hence had to justify his claims to power more explicitly.

A number of possible means of legitimation were explored. These included myths which discussed the possibilities of a god acquiring the position of the śreṣṭha or the rājā through a contract or through the performance of a ritual. In the human context, however, only the latter possibility of acquiring access to status through the performance of a sacrifice was developed systematically. The sacrifices which were considered useful from this perspective ranged from the relatively simple soma sacrifice prescribed for the śreṣṭha, to its variants, prescribed for the adhipati and the

svarāj, to elaborate rituals such as the rājasūya, aśvamedha, and vājapeya. As noted earlier, the tendency to devise complex rituals permitted, on the one hand, the incorporation of diverse practices, as in the case of the rājasūya. These included the ritualisation of contests such as chariot-racing and dicing. The incorporation of these practices was probably a means of ensuring wider support, as members of different communities could probably identify with the rājā who followed their traditions. At another level, the focus on complex rituals restricted the number of men who could compete for positions of status, as each performance of such a ritual presupposed access to resources and personnel which would have been beyond the reach of most men.

Such rituals, moreover, provided an occasion for communicating values relating to the new socio-political order, and of sanctifying such values. Nevertheless, as we have seen, their success rested on the participation of the populace, and this may have been increasingly difficult to ensure in a situation of growing social differentiation, and where attempts were being made to widen the sphere of control.

It was in this context that systematic attempts were made to incorporate values considered crucial for the new definition of rājya in particular, within the framework of household rituals. This was attempted both through sacrifices such as the agnihotra and the darśapūrṇamāsa as well as through rites of passage such as upanayana and marriage, in which the gṛhapati or male head of the household or his son was implicitly or explicitly equated with the divine or human rājā. As noted earlier, this meant that the norms associated with rājya could be reiterated virtually continuously.

The incorporation of the notion of rājya within the household was related to changes in the context within which the institution emerged. We had focused on the two most significant aspects of this context, the development of the varṇa-based order, and the consolidation of a particular form of household organisation, the gṛha (Chapters VII and VIII). We had seen how the former development reflected social differentiation resulting in the emergence of a definite, delimited, priestly category, and in groups which were able to develop and control forms of production, including agriculture, cattle-rearing, crafts, and exchange, typified by the development of trade. While this process of socio-economic differentiation made it more difficult to ensure the participation of all these categories in common rituals such as the rājasūya, it also made at least some members of each category more willing to turn to political leaders in order to ensure support for their specific social, economic, or ritual interests. Such support was especially important in a situation where definitions of the exclusive interest of each category were challenged and where attempts to consolidate and protect such definitions proved problematic, as is evident from the attempts of the priesthood to regulate access to sacrality. While the priesthood tried to counter challenges by brahmanising a range of beliefs and practices, the fact that this was a never-ending process points to the vulnerability of the priesthood. Thus, while their claims to ritual or sacral power were becoming important, they were, at the same time, increasingly dependent on external support for the maintenance and consolidation of such claims. In other words, a new, differentiated support base was potentially available to the rājā. This was probably consolidated by the recognition accorded to

the interests of such categories through the administration of daṇḍa, which, as noted earlier, was weighted in favour of some social categories against others.

At the same time, the attempts to consolidate the connections between the rājā and a differentiated social order focused on new bonds--those between the rājā and the gṛhapati. As we have seen (Chapter VIII), the creation and maintenance of these bonds was related to the development of the notion of a single household type, the gṛha, as the ideal. The gṛha was characterised by patriarchal control, exercised over the procreative powers of the wife, and over productive resources, which were ideally transferred from father to son(s). The establishment of the kinship bonds specific to the gṛha, i.e., the hierarchically ordered relations between the pati and patnī or bhāryā and supportive ties between father and son, were accompanied by the marginalisation or negation of ties with kinswomen other than the wife in particular. As noted earlier, this re-organisation of kinship ties, which permitted the consolidation of resources, was related to a range of sacral devices used to socialise kinsmen and women into specific roles. This involved associating men (especially fathers and sons) with notions of power typified by attempts to identify them with divine or human rājās, while women were confined to what was defined as their only legitimate role, as instruments of procreation within the context of the gṛha. The privileging of the gṛha as opposed to a range of other forms of household organisation was probably politically valuable, as it was based on the concentration of power in the hands of a single man, with whom negotiations and interaction may have been easier from the point of view of the priest or the rājā. Besides, the fact that the position of the gṛhapati rested on internalising notions of

superordination and subordination facilitated the legitimation of the new definition of political power which was emerging through analogies between the position of the grhapati-yajamāna which were often explicitly worked out.

Nevertheless, the attempt to structure kinship ties was resisted and in such a situation, while the grhapati was potentially powerful, he required the support of priests and rulers to actualise his power. Thus, ideological and material bonds were forged between the householder on the one hand and the brāhmaṇas and the rājā on the other, evidenced in the attempt to brahmanise domestic rituals and use these as occasions for communicating values conducive to the maintenance of rājya and gārhasthya, and in the giving of dakṣiṇā, dāna, bali, and ātithya or hospitality by the grhapati.

As suggested earlier, the fact that the later Vedic rājā, unlike his early Vedic counterpart, functioned increasingly within the context of a differentiated social order, resulted in a fundamental transformation in the very nature of rājya. This is evident when one compares the social roles ascribed to divinities such as Varuṇa and Soma with those associated with the human rājā in the later Vedic tradition and subsequently. The former were concerned with upholding rta, a universal, holistic order, whereas the latter were regarded as upholders of dharma (Chapter V). What is more, the specific aspects of dharma which were to be maintained were related to the concerns of varṇa and āśrama. Even within the framework of varṇa and āśrama, moreover, only certain aspects, regulating access to the domain of the sacred, which was particularly important for communicating values central to rājya and legitimating them and rights to property and women, were focused on, to the exclusion of

a range of other possible concerns. Thus, the very process whereby the later Vedic rājā was thought to acquire support and gain acceptance was characterised by a shift away from the earlier preoccupation with universal, undifferentiated, benevolence.

Although the content of the term rājā thus changed substantially the term itself was retained. This was probably owing to the fact that its earliest connotations were useful in disguising, and hence legitimising, the transformation which had taken place. This is reflected in later Vedic mythology and rituals, where the attributes associated with Varuṇa and Soma were modified or absorbed rather than explicitly negated.

The definition of rājya which developed in the later Vedic context and subsequently proved influential even in later situations. This is probably because this definition linked an apparently beneficial rājā with both the concerns of the dominant social categories which had emerged within a stratified society, as well as with those of the dominated. While the former link was more real than the latter, the insistence on both connections ensured that rājya gained widespread acceptance. Nevertheless, the connections could not be taken for granted, nor were they established once and for all. Thus, the maintenance of both the rājā and the social order on which he depended had to be ensured through the virtually continuous reiteration of what were perceived or portrayed as shared concerns.

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APPENDIX I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BRAHMANICAL TRADITION (c. 8th-4th centuries B.C.)

I

Perhaps one of the most vexed questions relating to the use of the brahmanical tradition for historical analysis pertains to determining the region(s) for which specific texts may have been valid. The problem is complicated by the fact that some of the texts contain virtually no references to specific places or geographical features such as rivers or mountains, the Gṛhya Sūtras and some of the Dharma Sūtras (e.g., ADS, GDS) being outstanding examples of this. Secondly, even where references do occur, they need not be directly related to the area in which the particular text was composed. For instance, in many cases, geographical references occur in legends, such as that about the aindramahābhiṣeka which was thought to have been performed on the banks of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā by Bharata Dauhṣanti (AB 8.39.9). Such a reference is obviously specific to the legend and may not be very directly connected to the area in which the text was composed or compiled. A third problem is related to what may be described as the ritual conservatism of the texts. It is likely that certain places or rivers may be referred to simply because of the ritual sanctity assigned to them, even after the geographical focus shifts away from the area. This is evident from the insistence that the waters of the Sarasvatī should be used in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.4.3) in a text which contains legends pertaining to areas further to the east such as Kosala and Videha (ibid.: 1.4.1.17). Fourthly, there is evidence for a certain clustering

of data within texts. For instance, all except one of the references to specific geographical areas in the AB come from the seventh and eighth adhyāyas, which are commonly regarded as later additions (Keith 1920:22). Similarly, in the BDS, all the specific geographical references are confined to the six sūtras which define āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.10-15), and list the names of people living on its boundaries, who were regarded as despicable. Such a clustering makes it difficult to be certain that any identification based on the data thus obtained is valid for the entire text. Further, very often the references are to people rather than to specific areas. While many areas were named after the tribes who settled there, identifications based on later developments need not necessarily be valid for an earlier period. Lastly, not all geographical references have been satisfactorily identified. Hence, while there is a broad consensus that the Rg Veda pertains primarily to the area drained by the Indus and its tributaries (R.S.Sharma 1983a:22, Witzel 1989:115), with the Yamunā and the Gaṅgā forming its eastern limit, the geographical locale of the other texts remains relatively uncertain.

A number of attempts have been made to deduce the geographical background of the texts on the basis of either the limited evidence available or through the use of other kinds of data. Thus, it has been asserted that, "from the way... in which the Aitareya mentions the Indian tribes, it may safely be inferred that this work had its origin in the country of the Kuru-Pañcālas" (Macdonell 1972:208). However, in view of the limitations noted above, such conclusions need not be necessarily valid for the entire body of literature.

Other attempts to arrive at the geographical background are based on rather tenuous evidence. For instance, in the context of

the Āpastambīya Kalpa Sūtra, Buhler (1965a:xxxi) cites the Mahārṇava which declares that the earth is divided into two halves, and the school of the Āpastambīyas prevails in the southern half. However, it has been rightly pointed out that "the regions inhabited at present by the followers of the various Vedic schools need not necessarily be regarded as the homes of the authors of those schools" (Kashikar 1966:162).

A more systematic effort to analyse the geographical background of the texts has been based on an examination of the evidence of flora referred to in later Vedic literature along with other references to material objects, and comparing these with the remains of the Painted Grey ware Culture (R.S.Sharma 1983a). More recently, an attempt has been made to trace the geographical distribution and diffusion of what have been identified as Vedic dialects (Witzel 1989) from primarily three centres, identified as the Kuru area, the Pañcāla areas, and the area of Videha and possibly Kosala (ibid.: 224-225). This is, in a sense, supportive of the evidence for the emergence of a composite tradition.

Here we will examine references to flora, crops, and metals, in addition to discussing the direct geographical references in the texts under consideration and discuss the extent to which they enable us to arrive at a clearer picture. The advantage of such references is that they are scattered throughout the texts. However, there are certain hazards involved in this as well. These relate primarily to identification and distribution, the major problem being that the present-day distribution need not necessarily coincide with earlier patterns. Nevertheless, the trends which emerge through the correlation of such information may be significant.

II

There are about sixty specific geographical references in the texts under consideration, listed below. Given the volume of literature, the relative paucity of such references is evident. In a few instances, the texts themselves contain information regarding the area to which they relate. This is occasionally referred to as the dhruvā madhyamā pratiṣṭhitā diśā (literally the firmly established middle region) defined as the area where the Kuru-Pañcālas are anointed as rājās (AB 8.38.3). This may be broadly identified as the Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab and adjoining areas to the west. Later texts (e.g., BDS 1.1.2.10ff, VDS 1.8.ff) define āryavarta as the land to the east of Adarśana, identified as the point where the river Sarasvatī disappears (Buhler 1965b:147), to the west of Kālakavana, identified as Prayāga (Cunningham 1924:xli), or in the Rajmahal Hills of Bihar (Dey 1971:84). Alternatively, it may be the "Jhāḍakhaṇḍa area to the south of Gaya, the east of Shahabad and the west of Bankura" (Bhandarkar 1931:108). The northern boundary was formed by the Himalayas, while the southern boundary was delineated by Pāripātram, identified as the western part of the Vindhyas (Dey 1971:149). An alternative definition of āryavarta included the area from the Sindhu-visaraṇī, identified as the boundary river (Buhler 1965b:147) in the west to the point of sunrise in the east, and as far as the black antelope roams. It is thus evident that there was a tendency to expand geographical horizons with the passage of time, and while the sanctity of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab was recognised, an effort was made to incorporate other areas within the scope of the brahmanical tradition.

The territorial definitions referred to above would indicate that these texts relate primarily to India north of the Vindhyas.

However, certain areas of north India such as Vaṅga and Magadha to the east, and Surāṣṭra to the west appear to have been excluded (BDS 1.1.2.14 ff). For our present purpose, we will define north India as the area to the west of Bengal, to the north of Magadha and the Vindhyas, and to the east of the Indus.

Given the fact that definitions of āryavarta occur only in three texts, it is significant that these definitions appear to be broadly corroborated by the specific references found in other texts. Thus, of the twelve texts which contain specific geographical references, in as many as eight cases almost all the references are to north India (see Table III for details). The four texts which diverge from this general pattern are the AB, AA, BSS, and the BDS, where a sizeable number of references to areas other than the core are incorporated. These include references to the Puṇḍras, Āndhras, Śabaras, Pulindas, and Mūtibas, as sons of Viśvāmitra, who were supposedly condemned because of their defiance of their father and banished (AB 7.33.6). All the identifiable groups referred to in the list are located on the peripheries of āryavarta, the Puṇḍras in east India, and the Āndhras, Śabaras, and Pulindas in central or south India. Others referred to include the Vaṅgāvadha-Cerapādas who were condemned on account of their violations of ritual norms (AA 2.1.1). Once again, the two identifiable references are to east India (Vaṅga) and central or south India (the Cerāpadas).

Elsewhere (BSS 18.13) a penance is prescribed for visiting the Kaliṅgas (in east India) and the Kāraskaras (in south India) as well as for visiting the Puṇḍras, Vaṅga, and Kaliṅgas of east India (BDS 1.1.2.15), while the Māgadhas of the same area were condemned as saṅkīrṇa yonis (ibid.: 1.1.2.14). The Avantis of central India

were similarly condemned, as were the Dakṣiṇāpathas and Kāraskaras of south India. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of the references are hostile in nature (15 out of 19), while three of the other references seek to demarcate India south of central India from Āryavarta.

A detailed analysis of the references cited above also indicates a certain concentration towards the north western areas on the one hand with a less marked concentration in the north east. This is evident from a comparison of Table IV which lists geographical references pertaining to the west of the Gaṅgā, and Table V, which contains references to the area of the middle Gangetic valley. The first contains 26 names and 74 references, whereas the second contains 9 names and 26 references. This would certainly indicate a preponderance of the north western areas as compared to the north east.

There is, further, a qualitative difference in the kinds of references. This is focused on in Table VI, which has been divided into three sections, dealing with references to the north west, the north east, and other areas. From this it is evident that nearly 65% of the references to the area to the west of the Gaṅgā are related to the sacrificial context, whereas this drops to less than 40% for the middle Gangetic valley, and amounts to little over 5% for other areas. This would suggest that different religious traditions may have been prevalent in the three areas, and that while the sacrificial cult may have been of predominant importance in the north west, it may have been less important in other areas.

Thus, the direct geographical references in our texts indicate that the area relevant to the brahmanical tradition may be broadly defined as north India. They also suggest that within north India

there may nave been distinct cults and traditions, and that attempts were being made to coalsece these into a composite whole.

LIST OF GEOGRABHICAL REFERENCES

Note: The list is divided into four sections, A,B,C, and D. Of these, Section A deals with references mentioned in Table IV, B with those in Table V, C with references to areas other than north India, and D with unidentified references.

SECTION A

Yamunā. A westerly tributary of the Gaṅgā, which rises in the Himalayas and meets the Gaṅga at Allahabad. Mentioned in the context of a legend about Turaśravas and Purūravatas (PVB 9.4.10), as the ideal locale for the performance of sattras (ibid.:25.13.4), as the place where the aindramahābhiṣeka of Bharata Dauḥṣanti was performed (AB 8.39.9, SB 13.5.4.11), in the context of the Sārasvatānām āyana (ASS 12.6.30, SSS 13.29.30), in the context of the sānnāyana sattra (ApSS 23.13.6), as the western boundary of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.11, VDS 1.12).

Sarasvatī. "It flows southwards through the Simla and Sirmur states forming a bulge...the river still survives and flows between the Śatadrū and the Yamunā (Law 1954:121). Recommended as a site for a sattra (PVB 25.10.1, ASS 12.6.1, ApSS 23.12.23), where the ṛṣis were supposed to have performed them (AB 3.8.1, ApSS 23.13.2), Kavaṣa Ailuṣa "sees" a hymn by which he makes the waters of the river follow him (AB 3.8.1), its waters were to be used in the rājasūya (SB 5.3.4.3) when a prayer was to be offered to the river to confer rāṣṭra on the sacrificer (BSS 12.8), the site of the Sārasvatānām ayana (SSS 13.29.1).

Kuru. "The ancient Kuru country may be said to have comprised Kurukṣetra or Thaneshwar. The district included Sonapat, Amin, Karnal and Panipat and was situated between the Sarasvati on the north and the Dṛṣadvati on the south" (Law 1954:50). Besides, the "Kurus must have occupied the northern portion of the doab or the region between the Jumna and the Ganges" (ibid.:102). Referred to as a janapada to the north of the Himalayas which would probably indicate the mythical Uttara Kurus (AB 8.38.3), associated with a specific form of cutting the sacrificial victim (SB 1.7.2.8), Devabhāga Śrautarṣa described as the purohita of the Kurus and the Śṛñjayas (ibid.:2.4.4.5), the speech of the Kurus praised (ibid.: 3.2.3.15), the Kuru rājas described as performers of the rājasūya (ibid.:5.5.2.5), Uddālaka Āruṇi referred to as a Kuru-Pañcāla brāhmaṇa (ibid.:11.4.1.2), Balhika Prātipiya mentioned as a rājā of the Kurus in a legend concerning the sautrāmaṇi (ibid.:12.9.3.3), Kuru-Pañcāla brāhmaṇas visit Janaka (BAU 3.1.1), the destruction of the Kurus (CU 1.10.1), the performance of the vrātyastoma by Kuru brāhmaṇas (BSS 18.26), Kurus described as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (ibid.:18.44), Parīkṣit described as belonging to the kula of the Kurus (SSS 12.17.1), the dakṣiṇā given at the vājapeya of the Kurus (ibid.:15.3.17, ApSS 18.3.8), Kurus referred to in the context of the mantras of the rājasūya (ApSS 18.12.8).

Pañcāla. Pañcāla was originally the country north and west of Delhi, extending from the foothills of the Himalayas to the Chambal in the south (Dey 1971:145, Law 1954:63). The aindramahābhiṣeka performed by Durmukha Pañcāla referred to (AB 8.39.9), the manner in which the Kuru-Pañcālas cut the sacrificial victim described (SB 1.7.2.8), the Kuru-Pañcāla form of speech praised (ibid.:3.2.3.15), Pañcālas regarded as performers of the rājasūya (ibid.:5.5.2.5), Uddālaka Āruṇi referred to as a Kuru-Pañcāla brāhmaṇa (ibid.:11.4.1.2), aśvamedha performed by Kraivya (ibid.:13.5.4.7) and Soṇa Sātrāsaha (ibid.:13.5.4.16), both Pañcāla rājās, Kuru-Pañcāla brāhmaṇas visit Janaka (BAU 3.1.1) and are decried by Yājñavalkya (ibid.:3.9.18), Pañcālas regarded as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (BSS 18.44), mentioned in the context of the mantra associated with the rājasūya (ApSS 18.12.7).

Kurukṣetra. The "region included Sonapat, Amin, Karnal and Panipat" (Law 1954:101). Regarded as great as the vedi of Prajāpati (PVB 25.13.3), nyagrodha trees called nyubja here (AB 7.35.4), regarded as a particularly sacred place where sacrifices were performed (SB 4.1.5.13), as the site of Pururavas's wandering (ibid.:11.5.1.4), as the place of divine worship (ibid.:14.1.1.2), a lake named Bisavatya referred to in Kurukṣetra (BSS 18.45), also a mountain named Auṣanas (ibid.:18.47), prophecy that the Kurus will be driven out of Kurukṣetra (SSS 15.16.11).

Dṛṣadvatī. Probably the modern Citrang which runs parallel to the Sarasvatī (Law 1954:75). Mentioned in connection with sacrifices (PVB 25.13.2) such as the sānnāyana sattra (ApSS 23.13.2), and the sārasvatānām ayana (ASS 12.6, SSS 13.29.29).

Adarśana. Identified as the point where the river Sarasvatī disappears (Buhler 1965b:147). Referred to in the context of the Sārasvatānām ayana (SSS 13.29.1) and as one of the possible western boundaries of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.10, VDS 1.8).

Plakṣa Prasravaṇa. Identified with Lavasa in the foothills of the Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh (Bharadwaj 1983:249). Caland (1931: 637) suggests that it is a journey of forty days on horseback from the point where the Sarasvatī is lost. Referred to in the context of the sattras on the Sarasvatī (PVB 25.10.22, ASS 12.6.29, SSS 13.29.20, ApSS 23.13.4,5).

Gandhāra. Probably comprised the districts of Peshawar and Rawalpindi in north Punjab (Law 1954:76). Rājā Nagnajit of Gandhāra was thought to possess knowledge of how kṣatriyas should drink soma (AB 7.35.8), referred to in a simile (CU 6.14.2), penance prescribed for visiting the Gandhāras (BSS 18.13), referred to as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (ibid.:18.44).

Madra. "Roughly corresponds to modern Sialkot and the surrounding regions between the Ravi and the Chenab rivers" (Law 1954:105). Referred to as a janapada to the north of the Himalayas, probably indicating the mythical Uttara Madras (AB 8.38.3), Uddālaka Āruṇi was thought to have lived amongst the Madras (BAU 3.7.1).

Sindhuvisaraṇī. Identified as the boundary river (Buhler 1965b:147). Referred to as one of the possible western boundaries of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.10, VDS 1.8).

(Sindhu) Sauvīra. Identified with Sindh (Dey 1971:183). Penances prescribed for visiting them (BSS 18.13, BDS 1.1.2.15).

Āraṭṭas. Identified with Punjab (Dey 1971:10). Penances prescribed for visiting them (BSS 18.13, BDS 1.1.2.15).

Kāmpila. Identified with modern Kampil on the old Ganges between Badaon and Farrukhabad (Law 1954:92). The mahiṣī in the aśvamedha was to be addressed as Kāmpilavāsinī (SB 13.2.8.3, ApSS 20.18.3).

Kārāpacavan. On the banks of the Yamunā (ApSS 23.13.6). A bath in the Yamunā at this point recommended (PVB 25.10.23, ASS 12.6.30).

Parīnah. Located in the Kuru-Pañcāla neighbourhood (R.N.Sharma 1977:23). Referred to in the context of the Sārasvatānām ayana (SSS 13.29.29, ApSS 23.13.13).

Naitadhanva. Located in the Kuru-Pañcāla neighbourhood (R.N.Sharma 1977:23). Referred to in the context of the sārasvatānām ayana (SSS 13.29.28, ApSS 23.13.12).

Triplakṣā. On the Yamunā. Referred to in the context of the Sārasvatānām ayana (SSS 13.29.30, ApSS 23.13.14).

Khāṇḍava Prastha. "It may be identified with the famous Khāṇḍava forest of the Mahābhārata" (Law 1954:98). The site of a sattra (PVB 25.3.6) and of Janamejaya's snake sacrifice (BSS 17.18).

Āsandivat. It may be identified with Hastinapura (Basu 1969:2). The site of the aindramahābhiṣeka of Janamejaya.

Sindh. Sind. Mention of saindhava horses (BAU 6.1.13).

Surāṣṭra. Identified with Kathiwar (Dey 1971:197). The Surāṣṭras described as saṅkīrṇa yoni (BDS 1.1.2.14).

Dvaitavana. "It was so-called because there was a lake called Dvaita within its boundary. According to the Mahābhārata, it was close to a desert and the Sarasvatī flowed through it. It was not far from the Himalayas, lying between Tangana on the north east and Kuruksetra and Hastināpur on the south east" (Law 1954:75). The lake was named after the rājā of the Matsyas who was supposed to have performed an aśvamedha (SB 13.5.4.9).

Paricakra. Identified with Ekacakra near Kampila (Basu 1969:2). Kraivya, a Pāñcāla rājā, seized a horse here (SB 13.5.4.7).

Bisavatya. Unidentified. Lake in Kurukṣetra (BSS 18.45).

Auṣanas. Unidentified. Mountain in Kurukṣetra (BSS 18.47).

Videha. North east Bihar, mainly modern Darbhanga, Monghyr, and Saharsa districts (Mishra 1962:1). Rājā Namin Sāpya of Videha who went to heaven by performing a sattra referred to (PVB 25.10.17), Sadānīrā as a boundary between Kosala and Videha (SB 1.4.1.14), Janaka of Videha referred to (ibid.:11.3.1.2, BAU 4.3.1), śīpatha transferred to the Videhas (BSS 2.5), Videhas described as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (ibid.:18.44), Jala Jātukarṇya referred to as the purohita of the Videhas (SSS 16.29.6).

Kosala. It extended from the Himalayas in the north to the Gaṅgā in the south and from the Ramganga in the west to the Gandak in the east (Dey 1971:14). Tryaruṇa Traidhātava, an Aikṣvāka rājā, referred to (PVB 13.3.12), the Sadānīrā as a boundary between Kosala and Videha (SB 1.4.1.14), Para Atnāra, a Kausalya rājā who performed the aśvamedha referred to (ibid.:13.5.4.4), as also Purukutsa, an aikṣvāka rājā (ibid.:13.5.4.5), pitta or bile transferred to the Ikṣvākus (BSS 2.5), Jala Jātukarṇya referred to as the purohita of the Kosalas (SSS 16.29.6), Hariścandra referred to an as aikṣvāka rājā (ibid.:15.17.1).

Gaṅgā. Rises in the western Himalayas and moves in a south-easterly direction to join the Bay of Bengal. The aindramahābhiṣeka of Bharata Dauhṣanti performed on the Gaṅgā (AB 8.39.9, SB 13.5.4.11), also referred to as a possible eastern boundary of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.11, VDS 1.12).

Kāśī. Identified as Varanasi (Law 1954:94). The rājā of Kāśī referred to as being unable to keep up the sacrificial fires (SB 13.5,4.19), the Kāśis referred to as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (BSS 18.44), Jala Jātukarṇya referred to as the purohita of the Kāśis (SSS 16.29.6), Ajātaśatru described as the rājā of the Kāśis (BAU 2.1.1).

Naimiṣa. It was situated on the banks of the Gomti in the Sitapur district (Law 1954:113). The people of this area performed a sattra (PVB 25.6.4), Vaka Dālbhya referred to as the udgātṛ of the Naimiṣa sacrifices (CU 1.2.13), sacrifices prescribed for the Naimiṣas (ApSS 23.11.10).

Kālakavana. Identified with Prayāga (Cunningham 1924:xli) or the Rajmahal Hills of Bihar (Dey 1971:84) or with "the Jhāḍhakhaṇḍa to the south of Gaya, east of Shahabad and west of Bankura" (Bhandarkar 1931:108). Referred to as the eastern limit of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.10, VDS 1.8).

Vaiśālī. Identified with the village of Basarh in Muzzafarpur district (Law 1954:265). Takṣaka Vaiśāleya referred to as the brāhmaṇācchamsin at Janamejaya's snake sacrifice (PVB 25.15.3, BSS 17.18).

Sadānīrā. Identified with the Gandak or the Rapti (Law 1954:32). Described as the boundary between Kosala and Videha (SB 1.4.1.14).

Kauśāmbī. Identified with Prayāga, modern Allahabad. Proti Kauśāmbeya referred to as a student of Uddālaka Āruṇi (SB 12.2.2.13).

SECTION C

Puṇḍra. Identified with Bengal (Dey 1971:161). The Puṇḍras described as the condemned sons of Viśvāmitra (AB 7.33.6), penance prescribed for visiting them (BDS 1.1.2.15).

Vaṅgas. Identified with Bengal (Law 1954:267). Vaṅgāvadhas condemned for the violation of ritual norms (AA 2.1.1), penance prescribed for visiting them (BDS 1.1.2.15).

Kaliṅgas. Identified with Orissa (Dey 1971:85). Penances prescribed for visiting them.(BSS 18.13, BDS 1.1.2.15).

Māgadhas. Identified with south Bihar (Dey 1971:116). Described as saṅkīrṇa yonis (BDS 1.1.2.14).

Pāripātram. Identified with the western part of the Vindhyas. Referred to as the southern boundary of āryavarta (BDS 1.1.2.10, VDS 1.8).

Vindhyas. Āryavarta defined as lying to the north of the Vindhyas (VDS 1.9).

Vidarbha. Identified with modern Berar (Law 1954:341). Bhīma of Vidarbha thought to have possessed knowledge about how kṣatriyas should drink soma (AB 7.35.8).

Avantī. Identified with Malwa (Dey 1971:13). Avantīs described as saṅkīrṇa yonis (BDS 1.1.2.14).

Āndhras. "The epigraphic evidence proves that they occupied the Godavari Krishna valley" (Law 1954:140). They may have originally been a Vindhyan tribe (Smith 1918:71). Described as condemned sons of Viśvāmitra (AB 7.33.6).

Śabaras. The "Śavara may be associated with the valley of the river Sabari, a left bank tributary of the Godavari" (Ali 1966:156). Described as condemned sons of Viśvāmitra (AB 7.33.6).

Pulindas. "Pulinda nagara, the capital of the Pulindas, was situated near Bhilsa in the Jubbalpore district in the Central Provinces" (Law 1954:184). Alternatively, the "janapada should be identical with the region between the Pranhita and Bandia rivers, two left bank tributaries of the Godavari which join it from the north" (Ali 1966:156). Dey (1971:161) holds that the janapada included the western portions of Bundelkhand and the district of Sagar. Referred to as the condemned sons of Viśvāmitra (AB 7.33.6).

Dakṣiṇāpatha. Identified with the Deccan south of the Narmada (Dey 1971:52). Dakṣiṇāpathas referred to as saṅkīrṇa yonis (BDS 1.1.2.14).

Kāraskaras. Identified with south India, probably south Kanara (Dey 1971:93). Penances prescribed for visiting them (BSS 18.13, BDS 1.1.2.15).

Cerapādas. Cera "comprised the present kingdom of Mysore and Coimbatore, Salem, south Malabar, Travancore, and Cochin (Dey 1971:48). Bhandarkar (1931:105) identifies them with the "aboriginal Cherus of Bihar and the Central Provinces pertaining to the Kol stock." Condemned on account of violating ritual norms (AA 2.1.1).

SECTION D

Mūtiba. Referred to as condemned sons of Viśvāmitra (AB 7.37.6).

Upavṛta. Described as saṅkīrna yoni (BDS 1.1.2.14).

Vayāṁsi. Keith (1969:200) suggests that they may have been a totemic tribe. Condemned for violating ritual norms.(AA 2.1.1).

Sthūlarma. The place from where the rāja of Videha was supposed to have gone to heaven after performing a sattra on the Sarasvatī (PVB 25.10.18).

Varsiṣṭhīya Prastha . Śibi Uśinara offered a sacrifice here (BSS 18.49).

Mahāvarsas. Glauma or lumps transferred to them (BSS 2.5).

Sparśavas. Described as the sons of Pururavas and Urvaśī (BSS 18.44).

Gaireyī Nadī. A bath in this river recommended (BSS 18.2).

Ibhya Grāma. Uṣasti Cākrāyana thought to have lived here after the destruction of the Kurus (CU 1.10.1).

III

In this section we will consider the evidence on flora, which provides indirect geographical information, and examine the extent to which this coincides with or diverges from the evidence available from direct geographical references. References to flora have the advantage of being scattered throughout the texts instead of being clustered in limited sections. Further, all the texts examined contain references to flora, listed below, which is in marked contrast to the situation pertaining to direct geographical references. There is also evidence that although plants were used for and referred to primarily in the ritual context, variations were envisaged For example, the ADS (1.1.2.38) states that the staff for a brāhmaṇa should be of palāśa, that for a rājaṅya of nyagrodha, and that for a vaiśya of badara. The GDS (1.24, 25) on the other hand recommends bilva or palāśa for a brāhmaṇa, and aśvattha and pilu for the kṣatriya and vaiśya respectively. This is interesting in view of the fact that pilu is a plant specific to south India.

However, there are certain problems in correlating the present-day floral distribution with the plants referred to in our texts. In the first place, not all the plants referred to have been satisfactorily identified. Secondly, it is likely that the distribution of plants is subject to change over a period of time. Hence, the correlation we arrive at need not necessarily reflect an earlier situation. Thirdly, given the usefulness of discussing floral evidence depends on the number of references available in a particular text, more numerous references enabling us to arrive at a better idea of the geographical locale, the paucity of references in texts such as the AA (four references) and the BAU (three references) needs to be noted.

For our present purpose, references to flora have been grouped into three broad categories, Category A comprising flora found only in north India, Category B comprising flora found only in south India, and Category C comprising flora found throughout India. As will be evident from Table VII, while an overwhelming number of references are to plants common to both north and south India, those specific to north India are relatively more important than those specific to south India.

This difference becomes more evident if one groups the references to each category in a ranked order (Table VIII). Here, while Category C is referred to the maximum number of times, in 19 texts, and Category A figures in the first position twice, Category B, pertaining to south India, does not occupy this place in any case. More striking is the ascription of the second position, which is assigned to Category A in 15 instances, and to Category B in only two cases, and the third position, which is assigned to the former only once, while the latter occupies it in the case of 16 texts.

To conclude, the data from references to flora are obviously not very useful in helping us to determine the specific geographical locale of any particular text. However, an analysis of the data is useful as it indicates that the Gṛhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras more or less conform to the pattern found in the Brāhmaṇas and the Śrauta Sūtras. This is particularly important in view of the fact that direct geographical references are virtually absent in the Gṛhya Sūtras and in the ADS and the GDS. Further, the data are useful in correcting biases which may creep in if one considers only the direct geographical references. Finally, the data indicate that virtually all the texts pertain to <u>āryavarta</u>, i.e., to India north of the Vindhyas.

LIST OF REFERENCES TO FLORA

Note: This list is divided into four sections, A, B, and C, corresponding with the categories mentioned above, and D, listing unidentified flora. Only a single reference to each plant has been cited from each text. Where two or more names occur for the same plant, or where more than one identification is possible for the Sanskrit name, these have been treated as separate references.

SECTION A

Muñja. (AB 8.37.1, SB 3.2.1.13, BSS 6.10, SSS 17.2.1, ApSS 15.5.7, AGS 1.19.11, PGS 2.5.21, SGS 2.1.15, ApGS 10.11, KGS 2.4.19, ADS 1.1.2.33, GDS 1.17, BDS 1.2.3.7). Identified as Saccharum Sara (SED.:s.v.). Found in Peshawar, western Tibet, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan (Hooker 1897:122).

Aśvattha. (AB 7.35.4, SB 11.5.1.13, CU 8.5.3, BSS 17.34, ASS 2.1.16, ApSS 19.20.15, PGS 2.15.4, GDS 1.25). Identified as Ficus Religiosa (SED.:s.v.). Found wild in the sub-Himalayan forests, in Bengal and Central India (Hooker 1885b:513).

Khadira. (PVB 21.4.13, AB 2.6.1, SB 1.3.3.20, BSS 9.1, SSS 16.3.2, ApSS 1.5.6, KGS 4.3.2). Identified as Acacia Catechu or Pinus Deodara (SED.:s.v.). The former is found throughout the Himalayas from the Punjab to Sikkim, ascending to four or five thousand feet above sea level (Hooker 1879:295). For the distribution of Pinus Deodara, see pūtudru below.

Pūtudru. (PVB 24.13.4, AB 1.5.2, SB 13.4.4.5, BSS 4.1, ASS 11.6.3, SSS 16.3.2,). Identified as Acacia Catechu or Pinus Deodara (SED.: s.v.). The latter is found in the north-western Himalayas from the Kumaon westwards, in altitudes between 3500 and 12000 feet, and also occurs in Afghanistan (Hooker 1885b:653). For the distribution of Acacia Catechu, see khadira above.

Pippala. (BAU 4.3.31, ApSS 10.16.11). Identified as Ficus Religiosa (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on aśvattha above.

Kala. (BSS 17.34, ApSS 19.2.10). Identified as Shorea Robusta (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the tropical Himalayas along the base from Assam to the Sutlej. It also occurs in the eastern districts of central India and the West Bengal Hills (Hooker 1872:306).

Ariṣṭa. (PGS 3.5.2, BDS 1.5.8.34). Identified as Sapindus Detergens Roxb (SED.:s.v.). It is cultivated throughout north western India and Bengal, Kumaon, Sylhet, Assam, and also occurs in China and Japan (Hooker 1872:683).

Haridru. (SB 13.8.1.16). Identified as Acacia Catechu or Pinus Deodara (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see khadira and pūtudru above.

Rājavṛkṣa. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Buchanania Latifolia (SED.:s.v.). It grows in the hot drier parts of India from Kumaon ascending to 1500ft and Oudh through central India, to the western peninsula. It also occurs in Myanmar (Hooker 1879:23).

Kaṇṭaki. (ApSS 15.1.1). Identified as Acacia Catechu (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see khadira above.

Ṭilva. (ApSS 22.4.15). Identified as Symplocos Racemosa (SED.:s.v.). It occurs throughout north eastern India between altitudes of 0-2500 ft, from the Terai of Kumaon to Assam and Pegu. It is common throughout the plains of north India from the Punjab to Assam and east Bengal (Hocker 1882:576).

Kośātaki. (SGS 1.23.1). Identified as Trichosanthes Dioeca (SED.: s.v.). It is found throughout the plains of north India from the Punjab to Assam and east Bengal (Hooker 1879:609).

SECTION B

Varaṇa. (PVB 5.3.11, SB 13.8.4.1, SSS 4.16.3). Identified as Craeteva Roxburghii (SED.:s.v.). It is found near the streams of Malabar (Hooker 1872:172).

Vetasa. (BSS 10.47, SSS 17.3.10, ApSS 21.18.9). Identified as Calamus Rotang (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the Deccan peninsula and Sri Lanka (Hocker 1894:448).

Pilu. (SSS 12.16.5, GDS 1.25). Identified as Sanseviera Roxburghiana (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the Coromandel coast (Hooker 1894:271). It is confined to the western peninsula and Sri Lanka.

Avaka. (SB 13.8.3.13). Identified as Blyxa Octandra (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in Sri Lanka (Hocker 1885b:661).

Tejana. (BSS 4.1.). Identified as Sanseviera Roxburghiana (SED.: s.v.). For distribution, see pilu above.

Śiṃśapā. (AGS 2.8.14). Identified as Blyxa Octandra (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see avaka above.

Mūrva. (PGS 2.5.23). Identified as Sanseviera Roxburghiana (Banerji 1980:59). For distribution, see note on pilu above.

Candana. (ApGS 12.8). Identified as Santalum Album (Banerji 1980: 37). It is found in the Deccan peninsula, from Pune in the west to Midnapore in the east (Hooker 1885b:231).

SECTION C

Palāśa. (PVB 21.4.13, AB 2.6.1, SB 3.3.4.10, AA 5.1.3, BSS 1.3, ASS 3.10.23, SSS 17.3.2, ApSS 10.28.3, AGS 1.20.13, SGS 2.1.18, ApGS 10.9, PGS 2.5.25, ADS 1.1.2.38, GDS 1.24, BDS 2.3.6.4, VDS 11.53) Identified as Butea Frondosa (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the plains from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and Burma, ascending to 4000 ft in the north west (Hooker 1879:194).

Udumbara. (PVB 18.2.11, AB 5.24.5, SB 9.2.2.3, AA 1.2.3, BAU 4.3.31, BSS 2.7, ASS 4.8, SSS 14.16.3, ApSS 22.1.10, AGS 2.8.11, PGS 2.5.27, SGS 1.22.8, ApGS 10.8, KGS 4.3.10, ADS 1.1.2.38, VDS 11.54). Identified as Ficus Glomerata (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the outer Himalayas and the plains and low hills of India, from Rajasthan and the Salt Range to the Khasia mountains, Myanmar, the Deccan peninsula, and Sri Lanka (Hocker 1885b:536).

Kusá. (AB 1.1.3, SB 4.5.10.6, BSS 6.25, ASS 1.13.1, SSS 17.4.5, ApSS 14.24.12, AGS 2.7.4, PGS 1.1.4, SGS 1.8.2, KGS 1.1.4, GDS 1.48, BDS 2.3.6.31, VDS 15.12). Identified as Poa Cynosuroides (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the plains of India from Peshawar and Sind to Myanmar and southward, in moist places. It is not found in Sri Lanka. It is found as far west as Syria and north Africa (Hooker 1897:325).

Bilva. (PVB 21.4.13, AB 2.16.1, SB 1.3.3.20, BSS 7.6, SSS 15.1.16, ApSS 1.5.8, AGS 1.19.13, PGS 2.5.26, SGS 2.1.18, GDS 1.24, BDS 1.5.8.33, VDS 20.21). Identified as Aegle Marmelos (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India in dry places, from the Jhelum to Assam and southwards to Travancore, wild or cultivated, ascending up to 4000 ft in the western Himalayas (Hooker 1872:517).

Vaṁśa/Venu. (SB 1.1.4.19, CU 3.1.1., BSS 9.1, SSS 3.12.2, ApSS 21.18.9, AGS 2.9.1, PGS 2.6.31, SGS 3.1.11, KGS 4.4.2, GDS 2.50, BDS 1.6.14.10, VDS 12.37). Identified as Bambusa Arundinacea (Banerji 1980:85). It is found throughout the plains and low hills of India and Sri Lanka, wild and cultivated (Hooker 1897:395).

Nyagrodha. (AB 7.35.4, SB 13.2.7.3, CU 6.12.1, BSS 17.34, ApSS 12.24.5, PGS 1.14.3, SGS 1.20.2, ApGS 11.15, KGS 2.2.20, ADS 1.1.2.38, VDS 11.53). Identified as Ficus Indica (SED.:s.v.). It is found in Myanmar, Perak, Singapore, the Andaman and Malay Islands and in most parts of India (Hooker 1885b:507).

Śami. (SB 9.2.3.37, BSS 2.7, ASS 2.1.16, SSS 4.16.3, ApSS 10.28.3, AGS 2.8.11, PGS 1.6.1, SGS 1.13.15, ApGS 17.1, KGS 1.3.18). Identified as Acacia Suma (SED.:s.v.). It is found in Bengal and Bihar, the western Peninsula, and Sri Lanka (Hooker 1879:294).

Badara. (SB 5.5.4.10, BSS 9.1., ApSS 1.14.1, SGS 4.4.10, ApGS 11.15, ADS 1.1.2.38). Identified as Zizyphus Jujuba (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India from the north western frontier, Sind and the base of the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and Malacca. Elsewhere, it occurs in Afghanistan, tropical Africa, the Malay archipelago, China and Australia.(Hooker 1872:632).

Durva. (SB 4.5.10.5, SSS 4.15.5, ApSS 14.24.12, AGS 2.9.3, SGS 6.3.7). Identified as Cynodon Dactylon (Banerji 1980:39). It grows throughout India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, ascending upto 5000ft in the Himalayas. It occurs in all warm countries (Hooker 1897:289).

Ūtika/Pūtika. (PVB 9.5.3, BSS 9.1, ASS 6.8.5, SSS 13.6.3, ApSS 1.14.1). Identified as Caesalpinia Bonducella (Banerji 1980:69). It is found from the Himalayas throughout India, ascending upto 2500 ft in Kumaon. It is common in the tropics (Hocker 1879:254).

Plakṣa. (PVB 21.4.13, AB 7.35.4, SB 3.8.3.10, BSS 4.1, ApSS 20.13.12) Identified as Ficus Infectoria (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in the plains and lower hills of India from the Salt Range to Sikkim, Bengal, Assam, and Myanmar. It also occurs in the peninsula and is found in the Malay peninsula and Sri Lanka (Hooker 1885b:516).

Apāmārga. (SB 5.2.4.14, BSS 12.4, AGS 2.7.5, SGS 3.1.3). Identified as Achyranthes Aspera (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India and Sri Lanka, an abundant weed in dry places. It also occurs in tropical Asia, Africa, Australia, and America (Hooker 1885a:730).

Balbaja. (SB 14.1.3.11, BSS 28.13, PGS 2.5.24, ADS 1.7.21.1). Identified as Eleusine Indica (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout the low country of India (ascending up to 5000 ft in the Himalayas) and also occurs in Penang and Sri Lanka (Hooker 1897:294).

Karkandhu. (SB 5.5.4.10, BSS 17.34, ApSS 19.2.10, SGS 4.19.2). Identified as Zizyphus Jujuba (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see badara above. —

Phālguna. (SB 4.5.10.2, BSS 18.8, ASS 6.8.5, ApSS 14.24.12). Identified as Terminalia Arjuna (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the Deccan, Sri Lanka, and the sub-Himalayan tracts of the north west provinces (Hooker 1879:447).

Rajjudāla. (SB 13.4.4.5, BSS 15.14, SSS 16.3.4, ApSS 20.9.6). Identified as Cordia Myxa Latifolia (SED.:s.v.). It occurs throughout India and Sri Lanka (Hooker 1885a:136), between altitudes of 0-3000 ft, and is also found from Egypt to Vietnam and tropical Australia.

Gavedhuka. (SB 9.1.1.8, BSS 10.47, SGS 5.6.2). Identified as Coix Barbata (SED.:s.v.). It grows in the hot and damp parts of India from the Punjab to Assam and Manipur and southward to Sri Lanka. It also occurs in Java (Hooker 1897:102).

Vibhītaka. (SB 13.8.1.16, BSS 28.13, SSS 14.22.15, ADS 2.10.25.12). Identified as Terminalia Bellerica (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India and is common in the plains and lower hills, extending to Sri Lanka and Malacca, though it is not found in the desert region. It is also found in Malaysia (Hooker 1879:445).

Arka. (SB 9.1.1.4, BSS 9.17, ApSS 15.5.11). Identified as Calotropis Gigantea (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India, ascending to 3000 ft in the Himalayas, from Punjab to Assam, Sri Lanka, and Singapore. It is also found in the Malay islands and south China (Hooker 1885a:18).

Karṣmarya. (SB 3.4.1.16, BSS 4.1., ApSS 1.5.8). Identified as Gmelina Arborea (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout the Deccan peninsula and Sri Lanka and extends to the foot of the north western Himalayas, and to Chittagong in the east. It also occurs in the Malayan and Phillipine islands (Hooker 1885a:581).

Vikaṅkata. (SB 9.2.3.39, BSS 2.7, ApSS 5.17.5). Identified as Flacourtia Sapida (SED.:s.v.). It is common throughout India and is found in Madagascar and the eastern Archipelago (Hooker 1872:193).

Aśvavāla. (SB 3.4.1.17, BSS 6.10, ApSS 7.7.7). Identified as Saccharum Spontaneum (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout the warmer parts of India and Sri Lanka, ascending to 6000 ft in the Himalayas. It also occurs in southern Europe and the warmer regions of the Old World (Hooker 1897:119).

Iṣīka. (CU 5.24.3, BSS 5.5., BDS 2.7.13.1). Identified as Saccharum Spontaneum (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see aśvavāla above.

Karīra. (SB 2.5.2.11, BSS 5.5., ApSS 8.6.13). Identified as Capparis Aphylla (SED.:s.v.). It grows in the driest places in Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Deccan and south India. It is also found in Arabia, Egypt, and north tropical Africa (Hooker 1872:175).

Tilaka. (SB 13.8.1.16, BSS 28.13, AGS 2.7.5). Identified as Clerodendrum Phlomoides (SED.:s.v.). It occurs from the north western Himalayan Terai to Sri Lanka, and is found in Bihar, and Orissa, but not in Bengal (Hooker 1885a:590).

Ādāra. (SB 14.1.2.12, ApSS 14.24.12). Identified as Caesalpinia Bonducelli (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on ūtika above.

Virīṇa. (SB 13.8.1.15, AGS 2.7.4). Identified as Andropogon Muricatus (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout the plains and lower hills of India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, upto 4000 ft, and also occurs in Java and tropical Africa (Hooker 1897:187).

Alābū. (SSS 12.18.1, BDS 1.6.14.10). Identified as Lagenaria Vulgaris (SED.:s.v.). It is cultivated throughout India and also in the tropics and warm temperate zone of the whole world (Hooker 1879: 614).

Śālmalī. (SB 13.2.7.4, BSS 28.13). Identified as Salmalia Malabarica (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in the tropical Himalayas and throughout the hotter forest regions of India to Myanmar and Sri Lanka. It is also found in Java and Sumatra (Hooker 1872:349).

Śaṅkhapuṣpi. (BDS 2.1.1.21, VDS 27.11). Identified as Canscora Decussata (SED.:s.v.). It occurs throughout India, ascending to 4000 ft, from the Himalayas to Myanmar. It is not uncommon in Sri Lanka, and also occurs in Africa (Hooker 1885a:104).

Aśmagandha. (SB 13.8.1.16). Identified as Physalis Flexuosa (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India (Hooker 1885a:238).

Atasi. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Crotolaria Retusa (Banerji 1980: 32). The plant is found from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka, and also occurs in China, Malaysia, north Australia, tropical Africa and America (Hooker 1879:75).

Kapittha. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Feronia Elephantum (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India from the Punjab eastward and southward to Sri Lanka, ascending to 1500 ft in the western Himalayas (Hooker 1872:516).

Kṛṣṇatala. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Xanthochymus Pictorius (SED.: s.v.). It is found in east Bengal and the eastern Himalayas and in the eastern and western parts of the peninsula (Hooker 1872:269).

Nimba. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Azadirachta Indica (SED.:s.v.). It is common throughout the greater part of India (Hooker 1872:544).

Rājavṛkṣa. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Euphorbia Tirucalli (SED.: s.v.). It is found in Bengal, the Deccan peninsula, and north western India. It also occurs in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Africa (Hooker 1885b:254). For an alternative identification and distribution, see Section A.

Śleṣmātaka. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Cordia Latifolia (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see rajjudāla above.

Citra. (ApSS 5.17.5). Identified as Plumbago Zeylanica (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout India, and occurs throughout the tropics of the old world (Hooker 1882:480).

Picumanda. (PGS 3.10.24). Identified as Azadirachta Indica (SED.: s.v.). For distribution, see note on nimba above.

Vīratara. (PGS 1.15.3). Identified as Andropogon Muricatus (SED.: s.v.). For distribution, see note on virāṇa above.

Kākātani. (SGS 1.23.1). Identified as Cucumis Colocynthis (SED.: s.v.). It occurs from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and Thailand, ascending to 3500 ft. It is found throughout the tropics (Hooker 1879:175).

Usīra. (ApGS 18.11). Identified as Andropogon Muricatus (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on virāṇa above.

Tamāla. (ADS 1.1.2.37). Identified as Xanthochymus Pictorius (SED.: s.v.). For distribution, see note on kṛṣṇatala above.

Āmra. (BAU 4.3.31). Identified as Mangifera Indica (Banerji 1980: 28). It is found in the tropical Himalayas from altitudes of 1-3000 ft, from the Kumaon to the Bhutan Hills, and the valleys of Bihar, the Khasia Mountains, Myanmar, Oudh, and the western peninsula. It is also cultivated as far west as Muscat and other parts of the tropics (Hooker 1879:14).

Śiṁśapa. (SSS 12.18.1). Identified as Dalbergia Sissoo (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in the plains throughout India, ascending to 5000 ft in the central Himalayas. It also occurs in Afghanistan and Baluchistan (Hooker 1879:231).

Sphūrjaka. (SB 13.8.1.16). Identified as Diospyros Embryopteris (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in India from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and it is very common in Myanmar and Thailand, and the Malayan archipelago (Hooker 1882:556).

Akṣa. (CU 7.3.1). Identified as Terminalia Bellerica (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on vibhītaka above.

Āmalaka. (CU 7.3.1). Identified as Terminalia Bellerica (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on vibhītaka above.

Kola. (CU 7.3.1). Identified with Piper Longum (SED.:s.v.). It is found in the hotter provinces of India from eastern Nepal and Assam, the Khasi mountains, and Bengal, westward to Bombay and southward to Travancore, Sri Lanka, and Malacca, wild or cultivated. It also occurs in the Malay Islands (Hooker 1885b:83).

Karañja. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Pongamia Glabra (SED.:s.v.). It occurs from the central and eastern Himalayas to Sri Lanka and Malacca, and is found in the Malay Isles, North Australia, Polynesia, and Seychelles (Hooker 1879:240).

Kovidāra. (BSS 28.13). Identified with Bauhinea Variegata (SED.: s.v.). It occurs from the foot of the western Himalayas to Sikkim at altitudes of 4000 ft and through India proper to Myanmar and China (Hooker 1879:284).

Nīpa. (BSS 28.13). Identified as Nauclea Cadamba (SED.:s.v.). It occurs from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka and is found in the forests of Pegu, Sumatra, and Borneo (Hooker 1882:23).

Parṇa. (BSS 14.16). Identified as Butea Frondosa (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see palāśa above.

Haridrī. (ApSS 10.28.3). Identified as Rubia Munjista (SED.:s.v.). It is found throughout the hilly tracts of India from the north western Himalayas eastwards, ascending to 8000 ft and southwards to Sri Lanka and Malacca. It also occurs in north east Asia from Dahuria to Japan and Java, and is found in tropical Africa (Hooker 1882:202).

Rohitaka. (ApSS 1.5.8). Identified as Andersonia Rohitaka (SED.: s.v.). It is found in Assam, Sylhet, Cachar, Oudh, the western peninsula from the Konkan to Travancore, Tenasserim, and the Andaman Islands, Malacca, and Sri Lanka. It also occurs in the Malay archipelago, and the Phillipine islands (Hooker 1872:559).

Śimhi. (PGS 1.13.1).— Identified as Solanum Jacquins. It is found throughout India from the Punjab and Assam to Sri Lanka and Malacca. It also occurs in south east Asia, Malaysia, tropical Australia, and Polynesia (Hooker 1885a:236).

Sadāpuṣpa. (SGS 3.1.3). Identified as Calotropis Gigantea (SED.: s.v.). For distribution, see note on arka above.

Śirīṣa. (SGS 4.17.3). Identified as Acacia Sirissa (SED.:s.v.). It occurs in the tropical Himalayas ascending to 5000 ft in the central provinces and 4000 ft in the Khasia Hills, through India proper and Sri Lanka to Myanmar and the Tenasserim. It also occurs in the Malay Isles, China, north Australia, and tropical Africa (Hooker 1879:298).

Kiṃśuka. (ApGS 18.6). Identified as Butea Frondosa (SED.:s.v.). For distribution, see note on palāśa above.

Pāṭha. (ApGS 9.5). Identified as Clypea Hernandifolia (SED.:s.v.). It is found from Nepal to Chittagong, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. It also occurs in the Malay Islands, tropical Australia, and Africa (Hooker 1872:103).

SECTION D

Nala. (BSS 28.13, BDS 1.6.14.11).

Bādhaka. (BSS 14.16, SSS 14.22.14, ApSS 22.4.15).

Tṛpa. (BSS 25.34, SSS 16.12.20, BDS 1.6.13.12).

Parivyādha. (AGS 2.7.5).

Bhūmipāśa. (SB 13.8.1.16).

Kṛmuka. (SB 6.6.2.11).

Kuvala. (SB 5.5.4.10).

Nāmba. (SB 5.3.3.8).

Pṛśniparṇi. (SB 13.8.1.16).

Araru. (BSS 28.13).

Dāradura. (BSS 28.13).

Kutapa. (BSS 28.13).

Māndhuka. (BSS 14.18).

Śunthi. (BSS 28.13).

Dhanvan. (SSS 14.22.11).

Aśmāntaka. (PGS 2.5.24).

Adhyāṇḍamūla. (SGS 1.19.1).

Bṛhati. (SGS 1.23.1).

Macakacātani. (SGS 1.23.1).

Madhuka. (SGS 4.17.3).

Āragvadha. (ApGS 18.7).

Eraka. (ApGS 12.3).

Sthagara. (ApGS 18.11).

Tūryanti. (ApGS 14.14).

Sidhraka. (BDS 2.1.1.15).

Vṛkala . (BDS 1.6.13.12).

Brahmasuvarcala. (VDS 27.11).

IV

The data on crops, like that on flora, have the advantage of being scattered throughout the texts. However, despite the number of references and their distribution, the data suffer from certain limitations as well. In the first place, texts such as the AA contain no references to any crops at all. Further, the crops referred to are far fewer than the number of plants referred to in the previous section. In fact, only twelve specific crops are referred to in the texts. Moreover, except in the Dharma Sūtras, almost all the references to crops are in the sacrificial context. The major problem however, is that the present-day distribution of such cultivated crops need not coincide with their past distribution. This problem is even more acute than in the case of flora, because the cultivation of specific crops is much more of a deliberate human activity than is the destruction of specific types of wild plants. Further, during the past century, major distortions have been introduced through the use of irrigation, which has immensely augmented the agricultural potential in certain areas. It must also be borne in mind that some crops such as barley and millets have declined in importance with the growing importance of other cereals such as wheat and rice. Hence, the present-day patterns may at best broadly indicate earlier conditions. It is also unfortunate that the archaeological record of plant remains is rather fragmentary, hence any conclusions based on such data can have only limited corroborative value.

Given these limitations, our effort will be to examine the extent to which the pattern which emerges from the study of crops corresponds with the geographical background outlined on the basis of the direct geographical references and references to flora in the previous sections. Hence, we will focus attention on whether the

crops mentioned relate to north India as defined earlier and whether the data substantiates the possibility of two nuclei within north India. Vrīhi or rice (PVB 1.8.14, AB 2.6.8, SB 1.1.1.10, BAU 6.3.13, CU 5.10.6, BSS 1.14, ASS 2.9.12, SSS 3.12.3, ApSS 5.19.4, AGS 1.9.7, PGS 2.13.7, SGS 1.3.10, ApGS 17.9, KGS 4.1.10, ADS 2.9.23.9, GDS 7.15, VDS 2.39, BDS 1.6.14.12) and yava or barley (PVB 1.8.14, AB 2.7.1, SB 12.7.1.4, BAU 6.3.13, CU 5.10.6, BSS 3.12, ASS 2.9.12, SSS 3.12.3, ApSS 13.5.4, AGS 1.9.7, PGS 2.13.7, SGS 4.4.9, ApGS 7.19. KGS 2.2.20, ADS 2.9.23.9, GDS 7.15, BDS 4.5.25, VDS 14.37), are referred to in all the texts except the AA. The other grains, śyāmaka or millet (SB 5.3.3.4, CU 3.14.3, BAU 6.3.13, BSS 3.12, ASS 2.9.13, SSS 3.12.1, ApSS 9.14.14, VDS 14.12) and godhūma or wheat(SB 12.7.1.2, BAU 6.3.13, BSS 11.1, SSS 14.41.6, ApSS 16.19.13, VDS 14.37) are relatively less important. Further, most of the references to these grains occur in the Śrauta Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras.

Turning to the present-day distribution of these crops, and confining ourselves to north India, it is evident that rice is of crucial importance in the north east, declining in importance as one moves towards north western India. Thus, numerous references to rice would suggest a bias in favour of the north eastern nucleus identified in Section II.

The distribution of barley, on the other hand, is more even. Thus, it is grown in most parts of north India, with the exception of the desert area of Rajasthan, south Gujarat, south Bihar, and West Bengal. Most strikingly, it is not grown at all south of the Vindhyas. This would certainly corroborate the hypothesis advanced earlier, that the texts in question primarily pertain to India north of the Vindhyas.

The position regarding millet is slightly more complicated, as at least three different varieties are cultivated at present, and it is not possible to identify śyāmaka with any of these varieties. Jowar is most important in the Deccan, but is also grown in Uttar Pradesh, parts of Rajasthan, and Haryana. It also shows a fairly marked northwestern concentration, being negligible in eastern Uttar Pradesh, and virtually absent in Bihar and Bengal. The distribution of bajra is almost similar, except for a marked concentration in the desert areas of Rajasthan. The distribution of ragi, is however, strikingly different. It is most important in the southern part of the peninsula. In north India, it is fairly important in a small area comprising the hills of western Uttar Pradesh, and is of some importance in the hills of north and south Bihar. If one identifies śyāmaka with jowar or bajra, then a bias towards the north western nucleus is evident, but if it is identified with ragi, then the bias is by no means as strong.

The distribution of wheat resembles that of barley, except for the fact that it is also grown south of the Vindhyas, in the western Deccan in particular.

Two oilseeds are referred, viz., tila or sesamum (PVB 1.8.15, SB 9.1.1.3, BAU 6.3.13, CU 5.10.6, BSS 18.23, ASS 8.14.3, ApSS 13.5.4, AGS 1.9.7, PGS 2.10.17, SGS 4.1.3, KGS 4.1.15, ADS 1.9.26.15, GDS 15.26, BDS 3.10.15, VDS 2.30) and sarṣapa or mustard (CU 3.14.3, BSS 28.13, SSS 4.15.5, PGS 3.10.24, SGS 3.1.3, ADS 2.8.19.1, BDS 1.5.8.36, VDS 3.55). As will be apparent, sesamum is referred to in most texts, whereas mustard is not referred to in the Brāhmaṇas, although it assumes importance in the sūtra literature. This would corroborate the trend towards comprehensiveness noted earlier. Both the oilseeds are grown in north India, sesamum being important in

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and the Deccan, while mustard is grown in the alluvial plains of north India, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (Singh 1974:219).

Māṣa, Phaseolus Radiatus or urd (PVB 1.8.15, SB 1.1.1.10, BAU 6.3.13, CU 1.10.2, BSS 10.9, SSS 4.1.3, ApSS 13.5.4, AGS 1.17.2, SGS 1.28.6, KGS 2.2.20, ADS 2.7.16.22) was evidently the most well-pulse. Other pulses mentioned include mudga, Phaseolus Mungo or moong (PGS 3.10.24, SGS 1.22.5) and masura (BAU 6.3.13). All the crops are cultivated widely throughout India (Singh 1974:196).

Three fibres are mentioned, kṣuma or flax (BSS 18.16, ASS 9.4.17, ApSS 5.4.10, PGS 2.5.16, SGS 1.12.8, ADS 1.1.2.40, GDS 1.19, BDS 1.6.13.10, VDS 2.24), śaṇa or hemp (SB 3.2.1.11, ApSS 16.9.4, PGS 2.5.16, ADS 1.9.24.11, SGS 1.24.11, GDS 1.19, VDS 2.24), and tulā or kārpāsa, i.e., cotton (ASS 9.4.17, GDS 1.20, BDS 1.6.13.10). The Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads contain virtually no references to these fibres. Of the three fibres, cotton appears to be of relatively less importance, while flax and hemp were of more or less similar importance. Linseed is grown in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (Singh 1974;219), while cotton has a more westerly distribution and is virtually negligible in most of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal. Once again, all the fibres occur in north India.

The last specific crop mentioned is sugarcane (SB 3.4.1.18, BSS 28.13, ApSS 21.18.9, ADS 1.5.17.19, BDS 1.5.12.14), referred to more frequently in the sūtra literature. The crop is of utmost importance in north India, although it also occurs in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

To conclude, all the twelve crops referred to are cultivated in north India. This would certainly corroborate the view that the texts in which these crops are mentioned pertain to this area. Further, most of the crops are common throughout north India, with only two crops being possibly specific to the north west and one to the north east. The fact that yava, which is common throughout north India, and vrīhi, which is predominant in the north east, receive equal importance in the texts would probably be an example of the process of amalgamation we had referred to earlier. This is to some extent corroborated by a comparison of the evidence on crops in the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras. We have already noted how the Sūtras refer to more cereals, oilseeds, and fibres than the Brāhmaṇas. This is not to suggest that the crops referred to in the Sūtras were not known earlier. What is likely is that in an effort to make the rituals more and more comprehensive, a wider range of crops was utilised. Thus, the data from crops broadly corroborates the conclusions obtained through a study of the direct geographical references and the references to flora.

V

The data on metals is by no means as copious as that on crops and flora. Thus, the AA contains no references at all to metals, and most of the Gṛhya Sūtras contain references to not more than two metals. This may be related to the relatively simple nature of the gṛhya rituals. In any case, the evidence is rather limited. Hence attempts to treat references to metals as examples of indirect geographical evidence can only be made with extreme caution.

Seven metals are referred to in our texts, gold (referred to as hiraṇya, suvarṇa, hema, and jātarūpa), silver (rajata), copper (ayas, loha, lohitāyas, and tāmra), iron, (kṛṣṇāyas or kālāyas), tin (trapu), lead (sīsa) and zinc (implied in the alloy kaṁsa or brass).

By far the largest number of references are to gold (PVB 18.7.6, AB 7.32.11, SB 13.2.2.16, BAU 4.4.4., CU 1.6.6, BSS 14.12, ASS 9.4.12, SSS 2.5.27, ApSS 5.19.3, AGS 1.15.1, PGS 1.16.4, SGS 1.13.7, ApGS 15.4, ADS 2.6.14.7, GDS 19.17, BDS 15.8.28, VDS 2.44). It is referred to in as many as 17 of the 19 texts surveyed, and references occur in virtually all categories of literature. While the most important source of gold in India is the Kolar field in Karnataka, gold from riverine alluvium has been exploited in Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh (Wadia 1966:91). It is quite possible that both these sources were known and exploited.

The next metal of significance is copper (AB 1.4.6, SB 3.4.4.3, CU 4.17.7, BSS 24.8, ApSS 5.2.1, AGS 4.3.19, PGS 2.1.11, SGS 1.28.7, KGS 2.3.27, ADS 1.1.2.35, GDS 22.27, BDS 1.10.18.18, VDS 3.63). It is referred to in twelve texts and in almost all the categories of literature. However, in cases where the word ayas is used, references may be to either copper or iron. Five texts also refer to lohitāyas, while four texts refer only to lohitāyas. Interestingly enough,

the Brāhmaṇas refer only to ayas. Copper is widely distributed, the major deposits being in South Bihar (Singhbhum, Chota Nagpur, Hazaribagh, and the Santhal Parganas). Other important areas include Rajasthan, (Alwar, Ajmer, Khetri), Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh (Garhwal), West Bengal in north India, and Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in south India (Wadia 1966:91). Thus, in the case of copper, one can suggest that north India was a possible source of ores, with greater certainty than in the case of gold.

Zinc (BAU 6.4.24, BSS 1.3, SSS 4.16.9, ApSS 1.16.3, AGS 4.6.18, PGS 1.3.5, ApGS 13.10, KGS 1.5.11, VDS 3.58) is mentioned indirectly in nine of the texts under consideration. It is used, along with copper, to make the alloy brass (kaṁsa). No references to this alloy occur in the Brāhmaṇas, although it is referred to in most of the other categories of literature. Zinc is found in Jammu and Kashmir (Riasi district) and the Zawar mines of Udaipur, Rajasthan (Wadia 1966:110). This is one of the few minerals which is at present found only in north India, and as such, references to it are significant for our purpose. This is particularly so in view of the fact that four of the ten references to the mineral occur in the Gṛhya Sūtras, which otherwise contain no geographical references, and refer to very few metals.

Silver is referred to in nine of the texts under consideration (AB 1.4.6, SB 3.4.4.3, CU 4.17.7, BSS 15.4, ASS 9.4.13, SSS 14.32.5, ApSS 20.2.6, BDS 1.5.8.28, VDS 3.62). Here, the data is markedly clustered, with most of the references in the Brāhmaṇas and Śrauta Sūtras. The total absence of references to silver in the Gṛhya Sūtras is significant, and would probably indicate that it was relatively difficult to obtain and hence was not used in the day to

day rituals performed by or prescribed for the average householder. Silver is found in small quantities in the copper belt of south Bihar, in the Sutlej valley in Himachal Pradesh, in the Zawar mines of Rajasthan, and in the Kolar gold fields of Karnataka. Thus, like gold and copper, it could have been obtained from both north and south India.

Iron is directly referred to in only four texts (CU 6.1.6, BSS 15.15, ADS 1.1.2.35, VDS 17.55). However, the possibility of an overlap with ayas has been noted above. Of the four direct references, two occur in the Dharma Sūtras, which would probably indicate that the terminology was much more clearly defined when these texts were composed. Iron ores occur in Singhbhum and Bonai in Bihar (Wadia 1966: 79 ff), in the Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh, in Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bengal. They are also important in Orissa, and occur in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala as well. Thus, iron, like most other minerals, has a fairly wide distribution.

Lead is referred to in six texts (SB 12.7.1.7, CU 4.17.7, BSS 12.10, ApSS 18.15.6, ADS 1.9.25.2, GDS 22.25). As in the case of silver, none of the Gṛhya Sūtras refer to the mineral. It is found in the copper belt of Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal, and also occurs in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka (Wadia 1966:86 ff). Thus, it could have been obtained from both north and south India.

The last metal, in terms of number of references, is tin, which is referred to in four texts (CU 4.17.7, ADS 2.8.19.3, GDS 12.4, VDS 2.26). Of these, three references occur in the Dharma Sūtras. The Brāhmaṇas, Śrauta Sūtras, and Gṛhya Sūtras do not refer to the metal at all. This is a rare metal in India, occurring only in the copper belt of south Bihar (Wadia 1966:106) and in Rajasthan.

The evidence on metals would thus indicate that of the seven minerals directly mentioned in our texts, five could have been obtained from a number of areas in both north and south India. However, two, zinc, and tin, occur exclusively in north India. This is particularly true in the case of zinc, which is referred to indirectly in all categories of literature except the Brāhmaṇas. Thus, the data on metals would corroborate the conclusions arrived at earlier, suggesting that the texts pertain primarily to north India.

The references to metals vary considerably according to the category of literature. Thus, direct references to iron and references to tin and zinc are absent from the Brāhmaṇas. The Upaniṣads refer to all the seven metals, the Śrauta Sūtras refer to all the metals except tin, the Gṛhya Sūtras do not refer to silver, tin and lead, and contain no direct references to iron, while the Dharma Sūtras refer to all the metals. While this would not suggest any difference in the geographical background, it would certainly suggest that the Dharma Sūtras and the Śrauta Sūtras (which contain the maximum number of references as well as references to virtually all the metals), were meant to be more comprehensive and all-encompassing, a tendency which has been noted in the analysis of the data on flora and crops as well.

To conclude, both the direct and the indirect geographical evidence would indicate that virtually all the texts under consideration pertain to north India. Further, it is possible to suggest that there may have been at least two traditions in north India, a north westerly one, possibly centring around the Kuru-Pañcāla domain, and a north easterly one, possibly centring around Kosala and Videha. An attempt appears to have been made to integrate these

traditions at various levels--through incorporating legends and rituals relating to each nucleus, and through conferring sanctity through the use in rituals, to more and more plants, crops and metals. It is also evident that no single text or group of texts diverges markedly fron the general pattern, though variations are discernible.

Thus, virtually all the texts probably pertain to the same area. This would imply that it is possible to study the evidence relating to the evolution of monarchy and related institutions, and view differences as indications of development over time. At the same time, the possibility of a certain amount of contradiction and conflict in the data must be borne in mind, in view of the possibility of at least two nuclei of development within north India, which appear to have been integrated into a composite theoretical framework.

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APPENDIX II

THE PROBLEM OF CHRONOLOGY

I

The problem of evolving either an absolute or a relative chronology for the texts utilised for the present study is complicated by the fact that they represent the compilation of traditions associated with various Vedic schools, even though they are conventionally assigned to individual authors. Thus, many of the texts contain early and later strata, and hence a single date need not be necessarily valid for the entire text.

In spite of these difficulties, a number of attempts have been made to assign both absolute and relative dates to the texts (e.g., Kane 1968, Keith 1925, Max Muller 1968, Witzel 1989 etc.). Generally, for arriving at absolute dates, reliance is placed on the influence or lack of it, of the grammatical principles enunciated in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (e.g., Kane 1968:75), and /or the links if any, with Buddhism. Thus, texts which do not correspond with the Pāṇinian norm are regarded as earlier, as are those which do not show Buddhistic influence. These criteria are also important in enabling us to arrive at a relative chronology in terms of the greater or lesser degree of influence of these features. More recently, attempts have been made to correlate textual data with archaeological evidence (e.g., Witzel 1989).

The relative value of applying one or the other of these criteria is difficult to assess, as each possesses certain advantages and disadvantages. In case one uses the yardstick of Pāṇinian grammar, it is obvious that any conclusion based on this is related

to the entire text and hence it is likely to be valid. Further, Pāṇini's work has the advantage of being that of a single author rather than of a school, a situation which is rather unique in Sanskrit literature (Agrawala 1953:3, Cardona 1980:160). However, Pāṇini's date is by no means undisputed, and suggested dates range from the 6th to the 2nd centuries B.C. Thus, Gonda (1977:477) suggests c. 6th-5th centuries B.C. as a probable date. The latter date is supported by R.S.Sharma (1968:24) and R.N.Sharma (1977:13). Kane (1968:79) argues for a slightly later date (c. 450-400 B.C.), B.K.Ghosh's (1942:220) date is even later (c.400 B.C.), while Keith (1925:20) states that Pāṇini is not later than c.300 B.C. The last date need not necessarily preclude an earlier one. Agrawala (1953:478) suggests a date around the middle of the 5th century B.C. after a detailed consideration of the evidence in terms of linguistic data and content. What is obvious is that absolute dates assigned to other texts on the basis of grammatical criteria would vary according to the date accepted for Pāṇini's work. As it is beyond our scope at present to enter into a detailed discussion of the debate centring around Pāṇini's chronological position, we will, for our present purpose, accept the possibility of the work being assigned to c. 5th-mid-4th centuries B.C.

A further problem relating to the use of Pāṇini's work is that many authors may not have followed Pāṇinian rules, hence, in such cases, divergence from the grammatical ideal need not necessarily be a sign of prior composition (Gonda 1977:477). This would suggest that linguistic criteria alone are by no means adequate for establishing either the relative or the absolute chronological position of any text.

The second criterion referred to above, viz., the evidence of Buddhistic influence, has the advantage of being more or less certainly fixed in chronological terms, as the rise of Buddhism is commonly assigned to the 6th-5th centuries B.C. Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for dispute on the evidence for Buddhistic influence on the brahmanical tradition. Thus, while Max Muller (1968:232) and B.K.Ghosh (1942:219-220) hold that the entire sūtra literature was composed as a reaction to Buddhism, other explanations are certainly possible (see above). Other data, which may reflect the influence of Buddhism more directly, are often markedly clustered in certain sections of the texts. Thus, while it is quite likely that the discussion on asceticism in the Dharma Sūtras may be a reaction to the Buddhist ideal, the chronological conclusions based on this correlation would be valid only for those sections of the text which discuss the issue, and need not necessarily apply to the entire work.

Given the problems inherent in attempts to establish an absolute chronology, a number of criteria have been used to establish a relative chronology of the texts. Such criteria include discussions on the evolution of rituals, evidence of socio-economic changes, discrepancies in content, and changes in style. It is obvious that the results arrived at vary considerably according to the number and nature of criteria used, and the level at which they are applied.

Ritual criteria are particularly important, given the fact that rituals are central to most of the categories of literature consulted. Nevertheless, establishing and interpreting ritual development is extremely difficult (Gonda 1977:480). For example,

Hillebrandt (1888:ix) and Kashikar (1966:157) consider the SSS to be early on the ground that it refers to the puruṣamedha which they regard as evidence of a "primitive" stage of society. However, Keith (1925:347-348) suggests that the puruṣamedha was probably not actually performed and was a later theoretical introduction in order to confer completeness to the cult. Thus, where the discussion hinges on such criteria alone, conclusions are clearly speculative.

Occasionally, criteria related to religious beliefs have been used to establish the relative chronology of texts. For instance, references to planets and their significance are extremely rare in the Ṛg Veda, although they become rather important in later works such as the BDS (Choudhury 1954:400). Similarly, the ADS has been regarded as older than the GDS on the ground that the latter refers to places of pilgrimage or tīrthas (B.K.Ghosh 1927).

Socio-economic criteria, likewise, yield different results, depending on the kind of criteria used. Thus, Smith (1958:192) assigns the GDS to c.500 B.C., the BDS to c.430 B.C., the VDS to c. 330 B.C., and the ADS to c. 200 B.C. on the ground that the first text refers to chariot warfare but does not mention cavalry or elephants. Further (ibid.:200), it refers to fewer taxes and contains fewer references to slaves (ibid.:215). B.K.Ghosh (1927) on the other hand, argues that the ADS is older than the GDS as laws of ownership are much less developed in the former text than in the latter. Further, while the former condemns (money)lending, the latter recognises it. In terms of social data, mixed jātis are unimportant in the ADS, although they are of considerable importance in the GDS. Besides, according to the ADS, men and women of all varṇas could be consulted as authorities for dharma, whereas the GDS

is much more restrictive and explicitly hierarchical. From the above, it seems evident that the conclusions based on broader, related socio-economic criteria have a greater likelihood of being valid than those based on limited, isolated criteria.

Discrepancies in terms of content are more useful in determining earlier and later strata within individual texts. Thus, the 7th and 8th pañcikās of the AB are considered to be late (Gonda 1975:344), as they deal with the animal sacrifice, expiations, and the "royal" consecration, whereas the logical theme of the Brāhmaṇa is the soma sacrifice.

Stylistic criteria are also useful in establishing the relative chronological position of the texts. Thus, there is a clear shift in style as one moves from the Brāhmaṇas, where the authors do not even attempt to express themselves concisely, to the later Sūtras, where every effort is made to save even half a syllable. For instance, the BSS is considered to be early on account of the fact that it is more Brāhmaṇa-like (Kashikar 1966:48) as is the ADS (B.K.Ghosh 1927). Similarly, in terms of style of organising and presenting the data, Kashikar (1966:156) suggests that those texts which contain a well-defined section for the paribhāṣā (definitions valid for the entire text) either at the beginning or at the end of the work, are later than those which have such definitions scattered throughout the text. Hence he suggests that the ApSS is probably later than the BSS, which is less well-organised.

Another stylistic criterion employed, especially in the context of the Dharma Sūtras, is the proportion of prose to verse. Generally, the Dharma Sūtras which contain a greater proportion of prose are considered to be earlier than those which contain verse,

as the later Dharma Śāstras are composed almost entirely in verse. Thus, Kane (1968:31) argues for the priority of the GDS on the ground that it is written entirely in prose, while the fact that the last three chapters of the BDS are written entirely in verse may be an indication of its lateness. Similarly, Chapters 25-28 of the VDS are probably late (Buhler 1965b:xxiii) as they do not contain a single sūtra.

From the above discussion, it is evident that contradictory conclusions can be arrived at depending on the criteria used (Gonda 1975:357). In such a situation, some scholars such as Lingat (1973: 31) have opted for a procedure which totally ignores the possibility of chronological variation, on the ground that such variations are impossible to determine. While such an attitude of resignation is certainly not called for, it must be admitted that we can at best arrive at a very broad chronological framework in the light of the present state of our knowledge.

Keeping these limitations in view, we will discuss the dates suggested for the Brāhmaṇas, Śrauta Sūtras, Gṛhya Sūtras and Dharma Sūtras in the subsequent sections, accepting the widely held view (e.g., Gonda 1975:22-23) that these were composed and compiled after the Ṛg Veda, which may be assigned to the second half of the second millennium B.C. It must be borne in mind that these sections do not necessarily correspond to chronological phases, as in some cases, the latest works in one category may be contemporary with, or later than, the earliest works of the next category. Further, certain categories of literature, such as the Gṛhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras, may be more or less contemporary.

II

The absolute chronology of the Brāhmaṇas has been the subject of considerable speculation. Some suggestions, such as that which dates the texts to c.2800 B.C., are clearly improbable (Gonda 1975: 360). More plausible hypotheses include the suggestion that the Brāhmaṇas may be assigned to the period c. 10th to 7th centuries B.C. (ibid., Beni Prasad 1938:34). This is mainly on the basis of linguistic criteria, which indicate that most of the texts may be pre-Pāṇinian. Further, Pāṇini refers to Brāhmaṇas of thirty or forty adhyāyas or chapters, which may indicate the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa and the AB (Gonda 1975:360, Keith 1920:42). Keith (1925:19-20), on the other hand, argues for a slightly later period (c. 800-600 B.C.) on the ground that the Brāhmaṇas are related to the Upaniṣads, which were composed c.6th century B.C., as Buddhism presupposes their existence. R.S.Sharma (1968:15) likewise argues that the date of the AB and SB in particular "cannot be pushed much beyond c.700 B.C. or so." From the above it would appear that most of the Brāhmaṇas would in all likelihood pertain to the earlier part of the period which is the focus of our study, though some of them would probably relate to an even earlier period.

If the absolute chronology of the Brāhmaṇas can be ascertained within rather broad limits, the relative chronology is open to dispute. Thus, Macdonell (1972:205) assigns the PVB and the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa to the earliest strata, as their syntax and vocabulary are most archaic, with the JB, Kauṣītaki, and AB in the next category, and the SB amongst the latest on account of its advance in the use of tenses. Besides, the treatment of the ceremonial is more lucid and systematic in the last-named work, and the inclusion of the Upaniṣad and a certain amount of

philosophical discussion is also noteworthy (ibid.:219). Vaidya (1928:278) on the other hand, considers the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa to be nearly as old (italics mine) as the SB, on the ground that accents are employed in both. Elsewhere, Keith (1920:46) considers the AB to be the oldest of the Brāhmaṇas, followed by the PVB, JB, and SB. Caland (1931;xviii-xix) however, argues for the priority of the JB over the PVB on the ground that the former is more prolix, while the latter is more concise, and merely refers to legends, knowledge of which it takes for granted.

It is obvious from the above that it is well-nigh impossible to arrive at any final solution to the problem of relative chronology. While there appears to be a general consensus on the relatively late position of the SB and the last three pañcikās of the AB, the position of the other texts can by no means be settled with certainty. The problem is further complicated by the presence of distinct strata in most texts. Thus, while it is possible that the earliest sections of the AB should be grouped along with the early Brāhmaṇas such as the JB, its later sections would obviously not belong to the same period.

The presence of distinct strata may be noted in the PVB, AB, and SB. Thus, the first three chapters of the PVB contain material not normally found in a Brāhmaṇa (Gonda 1975:348). Hence, it is quite likely that these were incorporated into the text at a later stage. Similarly, for the AB, Macdonell (1972:207) argues that the last three pañcikās are probably late, as they are marked by the use of the present tense in a grammatical form. In terms of content, these sections deal with the agnihotra and the consecration of the rājā, and the fact that the related Śāṅkhāyana or Kauṣītakī

Brāhmaṇa does not contain similar material (which is dealt with in the SSS, ibid.:207), would probably indicate its lateness (Keith 1920:29, Gonda 1975:344-45).

As in the case of the AB, different strata may be discerned in the SB as well. Thus, the 12th kāṇḍa or book is referred to as the middle one, which is certainly not justified by its present position towards the end of the work, which consists of 14 books (Eggeling 1963a:xxix). Further, Patañjali refers to the śaṣṭhipatha and the śatapatha (i.e., books consisting of 60 and 100 chapters respectively). While the text at present consists of a hundred chapters, to which it owes its name, the first nine books contain sixty chapters, and may have probably constituted an independent work earlier (ibid.). Besides, strata are discernible within the first nine books as well. Thus, while Books I-IV cite Yājñavalkya as an authority (Gonda 1975: 352), the most important authority in Books VI-IX is Śāṇḍilya (ibid.: 353). There are stylistic and linguistic differences between these two sections as well, and the second section appears to be more archaic (ibid.:354). In terms of contents, the later books contain much material that is simply in the nature of an appendix and also includes references to subjects not normally dealt with in the Brāhmaṇas, such as the upanayana and the svādhyāya.

It is evident that the strata outlined above are merely broadly delineated and need not be valid for the entire contents of any one stratum. Nevertheless, they are useful, from our point of view, in enabling us to examine the possibility of change within the wide chronological span assigned to the composition and compilation of the Brāhmaṇas.

Turning to the earliest Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, we encounter the beginnings of a new kind of literature. Both the Āraṇyakas and

the Upaniṣads are attached like appendices to the Brāhmaṇas in some cases (such as the BAU to the SB) and initially at least, appear to have been linked to the sacrificial ritual. Thus, the Āraṇyakas were originally in the nature of secret explanations of the ritual, but gradually, the secret explanations developed independently of the ritual, culminating in upaniṣadic speculation (Keith 1969:15-16). In the process, the focus shifts to a search for the meaning of the absolute, relegating the sacrifice to a position of inferiority (Keith 1925:514). Both the words <u>āraṇyaka</u> and <u>upaniṣad</u> indicate an emphasis on secrecy. Thus, an <u>āraṇyaka</u> could be studied only in the forest, and the <u>upaniṣad</u> came to stand for a secret doctrine communicated at a confidential session.

The relative position of the Āraṇyakas and the earlier Upaniṣads vis-a-vis the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras appears to be fairly clear-cut. That they are related to and later than the Brāhmaṇas is evident from linguistic and stylistic evidence (Winternitz 1981:218) as well as from their position as appendices to the Brāhmaṇas (Max Muller 1968:305). Stylistically, only the latest sections of the Āraṇyakas are composed in <u>sūtra</u> style (ibid.), while linguistically, the oldest Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads represent a stage intermediate between the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras (Macdonnell 1972:207).

Despite the fairly secure position in terms of relative chronology, the problem of an absolute chronology remains. While it is generally accepted that these texts are pre-Buddhistic (Winternitz 1981:219, Max Muller 1969:lxvii, Keith 1925:19-20), the position vis-a-vis Pāṇini is not so certain. Thus, while Winternitz (1981; 218) suggests that these texts are pre-Pāṇinian, Max Muller (1968: 305) points out that while Pāṇini knew both the words <u>āraṇyaka</u> and

upaniṣad, he did not understand them as names for classes of sacred literature. However, the absolute dates suggested by Max Muller (1969;lxvi-lxvii) are fairly early (a lower limit of c.600 B.C., with the possibility of an earlier extension up to c. 1000-800 B.C.). Hence, it is evident that the texts in question were definitely composed within the time-span which is the focus of our present study. More recently, the correlation with archaeological evidence has been used to suggest a date around c.500 B.C. for the latest Brāhmaṇas, as well as for the earliest Upaniṣads, such as the BAU and CU and the earliest Śrauta Sūtras, such as the BSS (Witzel 1989;244).

The relative chronology of the Upaniṣads is fortunately the subject of much less controversy than that of the Brāhmaṇas. According to Macdonell (1972:228-229), the earliest Upaniṣads are the BAU, CU, Taittirīya Upaniṣad, AA, and the Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad, written in prose and influenced by the Brāhmaṇa style, followed by the Kena, which is partly in verse and partly in prose, while the metrical Upaniṣads, such as the Kāṭhaka, Īśa, Śvetāśvatara, Muṇḍaka, and Mahānārāyaṇa, and prose works such as the Praśna, Maitrāyanīya, and Māṇḍukya are late, the latest being the Atharva Upaniṣads. This is broadly corroborated by Winternitz (1981;217-218). However, both he and Keith (1925:498) consider the AA to be the oldest in this category of literature. This in likely in view of the fact that the AB is generally regarded as older than the SB or the Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa to which the other old Upaniṣads are attached.

The internal stratification of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads has unfortunately not been subject to the kind of study evident in the case of the Brāhmaṇas. However, it is apparent that texts such as the BAU and the CU show signs of fusion of several texts (Winternitz 1981;218). Where detailed studies have been made, as in

the case of the AA (Keith 1969:25), it is evident that the work is not of one time or hand. Thus, in terms of style and content, as well as on linguistic grounds, Keith (1969:25) and Macdonell (1972: 210) consider the first three books of the Āraṇyaka to be older than the fourth and the fifth. On these grounds, Keith (1969:61) suggests that the oldest part of the Āraṇyaka is older than the later part of the AB and probably older than most of the SB.

It is thus evident that while one may treat different categories of texts separately for purposes of analysis, the possibility of a chronological overlap must be borne in mind. Thus, a new kind of literature may emerge even while an earlier form continues to flourish.

III

It is obvious that if one considers the composition of sūtra literature to be a reaction to the rise of Buddhism, the absolute chronology of the texts cannot be placed earlier than c. 6th century B.C. Thus, Max Muller (1968:217) assigns the composition of the entire sūtra literature to the period between c. 600 and 200 B.C. However, if, as noted above, the sūtras were not composed simply as a reaction to the emergence of Buddhism, then it may be possible to assign an earlier date to some of the works at least. This is to some extent corroborated by linguistic evidence: "The language of the ritual sūtras represents a stage in the history of Sanskrit between the Brāhmaṇas and the epics" (Gonda 1977:644). Moreover, both the ASS and the SSS are pre-Pāṇinian (Kashikar 1966:157). Further, Pāṇini's work presupposes the existence of texts such as the Kalpa Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras (Agrawala 1953:460). Hence, if Pāṇini's work is assigned to the mid 4th century B.C. (Section I), it seems possible to argue for an early date for some of the texts under consideration. In this situation, Buhler (1965a:xviii) is probably right in assuming that the date of the sūtras differed for each Veda. This is supported to some extent by Kashikar (1966:161) who suggests that there were three phases in the composition of the Śrauta Sūtras. According to him, the BSS, Vādhula Śrauta Sūtra, SSS, ASS Ārṣeya Kalpa and Kauśika Sūtra were composed in the first phase, probably between c. 800-650 B.C., the Mānava, Bhāradvāja, ApSS, LSS, Drāhyāyaṇa, and Jaiminīya Śrauta Sūtras and the Nidāna Sūtra in the next phase (between c. 650-300 B.C.), and the Sātyāṣāḍha/Hiraṇyakeśin, Kātyāyana, Vārāha, Vaitāna, and Vaikhānasa Śrauta Sūtras in the third and last phase, ranging from c.300 B.C., to c. 400 A.D. This chronological stratification also corroborates our earlier hypothesis of an overlap between the Brāhmaṇas and the earliest Śrauta Sūtras.

From the above it is evident that the Śrauta Sūtras assigned to the first and second phase by Kashikar are particularly relevant from the point of view of the chronological focus of this study. Owing to practical limitations, we will confine the present study to the BSS, SSS, and the ASS in the first category and to the ApSS and the LSS in the second category. The choice is governed partly by considerations of chronology and partly by the need to explore independent developments, if any, associated with the schools of the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma Vedic traditions.

Turning to the problem of relative chronology, there seems to be a fair degree of consensus on the position of the BSS. Thus, Baudhāyana's work is a pravacana rather than a sūtra (Kashikar 1966: 157), being, by its very definition, a more extensive work, as a pravacanakāra "announces, expounds and divulges" (Gonda 1977:515). The work contains myths, and cites stanzas and formulae in full (ibid.:517). Thus, the work is "a link between the Brāhmaṇa literature and the normal sūtras" (ibid.:515). There are also linguistic resemblances between the Brāhmaṇas and the BSS (Kashikar 1966: 48). The early position of Baudhāyana is also corroborated by the fact that the section on paribhāṣā or definitions valid for the entire text is much less organised in the BSS than in other texts (ibid.:156). In more general terms, it seem likely that the tradition of compiling the sūtras originated in Yajur Vedic circles, which were most directly related to the actual performance of the Vedic ritual (Gonda 1977:490).

If the relative chronology of the BSS is fairly certain, that of the ASS and SSS is, unfortunately, subject to considerable controversy. While some scholars such as Kashikar (1966:157-158),

Hillebrandt (1888:ix) and Macdonell (1972:247) argue for the priority of the SSS, others such as Keith (1925:28) and R.N.Sharma (1977:14) argue for the priority of the ASS. According to Hillebrandt, the SSS is earlier as it bears a stylistic resemblance to the Brāhmaṇas in certain parts. Further, in ritual terms, it is probably early as it prescribed the performance of the human sacrifice. Kashikar (1966:157) adduces other ritual evidence as well. Thus, in the new and full moon sacrifice, the yajamāna himself should add fuel to the fire according to the SSS, whereas the ASS implies that this should be performed by the adhvaryu (ibid.:158), which probably indicates a later development of the ritual. The problem is, however, that a single instance need not necessarily prove the priority of an entire text.

The arguments for the priority of the ASS are also by no means fool-proof. Thus, R.N.Sharma (1977:14) considers the AGS to be older than the SGS in terms of style and ideas and hence regards the ASS as older than the SSS. However, as Gonda (1977:479) observes, such conclusions are not warranted unless the various sections of the Kalpa Sūtra are intimately connected with one another. Given the state of evidence available at present, one cannot help but agree that the problem is "for the time being probably unsolvable" (Gonda 1977:533).

The relative position of the ApSS is fortunately more certain. It differs markedly from the earlier BSS in terms of style and vocabulary (Gonda 1977:518), being much more concise and lucid (Garbe 1902:xvii). Besides, it is richer in content as a result of borrowing from other traditions (ibid.). Further, the position of its paribhāṣā at the end of the text may be an indication of a

comparatively late date (Kashikar 1966:156). However, Vaidya (1919: 37-38) considers Āpastamba to be the oldest of the sūtrakāras as he refers to a period when the Vedic hymns were regarded as made, and not eternal. As noted earlier in the context of the SSS, a single reference of this nature is not sufficient in determining the age of an entire composite text.

As in the case of the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas, different strata are discernible in individual texts. This is primarily owing to the fact that most of the texts "became gradually enlarged by various additions and modifications due partly to the mutual influence of the different schools and partly to the natural development of the ritual" (Hillebrandt 1888:x). Thus, in the BSS, the Dvaidha Sūtra (Chapters XX-XXIII) and the Karmānta Sūtra (Chapters XXIV-XXVI) are clearly later additions (Gonda 1977:516), although they contain material which may belong to the same period as the main text (ibid.; Kashikar 1966:44). Kashikar (ibid.:46) suggests that the 19th chapter may be late as well, as its contents are not referred to in the subsequent portions of the text. Further, he cites numerous instances of misplaced parts and minor interpolations in the remaining sections (ibid.:45-46). As in the case of the BSS, certain sections of the SSS such as Chapters XVII and XVIII appear to be later additions (ibid.:87). In the case of the ApSS, it seems obvious that the 24th or last praśna was "inserted by a later hand" (Garbe 1902: xiv), as both the style and the vocabulary appear to be different from the rest of the text. Further, of its three sections, the paribhāṣā, pravara, and hautraka, the last-named is probably the latest (ibid.).

It is thus evident that, like the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, the Śrauta Sūtras can be dated approximately in terms of each other and in terms of other categories of literature. From our point of view, it is important to note that most of the texts under consideration appear to have been composed and compiled during the period which forms the focus of this study. It is also significant that although the Śrauta Sūtras pertain to specific recensions of the Vedas, they cite mantras and injunctions from other recensions as well (Kashikar 1966:21). Thus, the ApSS, which belongs to the Taittirīya recension, cites the white Yajur Veda on occasion (e.g., ApSS 16.8.9-10 cites the opinion of the Vājasaneyas). This probably marks the beginning of an effort to evolve a common brahmanical tradition. This often results in the texts becoming contradictory in their effort to become comprehensive (Gonda 1977: 472). The effort to evolve a common tradition is also evident in both the Gṛhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras. With the growth of this tendency, many of the distinctive features of individual texts which serve as criteria for assigning chronological positions, tend to become blurred. This will be apparent from the discussion on the absolute and relative chronology of the Gṛhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras in the subsequent sections.

IV

If the Śrauta Sūtras mark a new stylistic development in the brahmanical tradition, the Gṛhya Sutras mark an equally important shift in terms of content. These texts are explicitly based on smṛti or remembered tradition (Max Muller 1968:68, Gonda 1977:468) as opposed to the Śrauta Sūtras which are based on the śrutis, i.e., revealed or divine authority. The ritual they prescribe is much simpler, designed for the average male householder. The major concern of the Gṛhya Sūtras centres around the rites of passage. Other rituals prescribed include routine daily, fortnightly and seasonal offerings, many of which have their counterparts in the śrauta ritual, as well as wish-fulfilling rites (kāmyeṣṭis, Oldenberg 1964b:xxvi, Ram Gopal 1983:11-12).

It is evident that the ritual as described in the Gṛhya Sūtras evolved relatively late in the brahmanical tradition. Other evidence as available at present would also indicate that the Gṛhya Sūtras were compiled fairly late. Thus, where the entire Kalpa Sūtra is available, the Gṛhya Sūtras are invariably placed after the Śrauta Sūtras. Secondly, most of the Gṛhya Sūtras contain references to the Śrauta Sūtras which precede them in the Kalpa. For instance, ApGS 2.5. refers to ApSS 2.2.7. Thirdly, and more important, the Gṛhya Sūtras are clearly modelled on the Śrauta Sūtras (Gonda 1977: 471, 548, Oldenberg 1964b:xxiii, xxx, Keith 1925:28). Hence it is obvious that the Gṛhya Sūtras as available at present were compiled after the Śrauta Sūtras. As the Gṛhya Sūtras are obviously later than the Śrauta Sūtras, it is likely that some of these texts would be more or less contemporary with the rise of Buddhism, corresponding broadly with the second phase of the composition/compilation of the Śrauta Sūtras noted earlier.

Correlations based on comparisons with Pāṇini also yield more or less similar results. Thus, according to Agrawala (1953:460), Pāṇini's work presupposes the existence of the Kalpa Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras. As far as individual texts are concerned, Panse (1961:19) considers the AGS to be pre-Pāṇinian on account of the fact that Vedic accents are employed in the text. More generally, he adds that the Gṛhya Sūtras of Āpastamba, Gobhila, Khādīra, and Āśvalāyana belong to such a period when the Pāṇinian grammar was not widely accpeted as a codification of the Sanskrit language. B.K. Ghosh (1942:226) likewise holds that "Pāṇini very probably had in view the language of the Gṛhya Sūtras."

From the above, it may be possible to ascribe the earliest Gṛhya Sūtras to a period broadly between the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. to the 4th century B.C., though some of the works would probably be later. Thus, it is likely that most of the texts under consideration would fall within the period which is the focus of the present study. Further, the evidence from these texts would obviously be valid for the latter half of this time-span, though in some cases references to earlier situations may be expected.

The relative chronology of the Gṛhya Sūtras is more difficult to establish than in the case of the Śrauta Sūtras. This is primarily owing to the tendency to evolve a common tradition, noted in the previous section. Thus, Oldenberg (1964b:xxxviii) observes that many texts contain "whole rows of sūtras" which agree exactly and yet it is difficult to establish which text borrowed from the other or whether they have borrowed from a common source (ibid.:xxxviii, Gonda 1977:552, Ram Gopal 1983:32). Secondly, many attempts to arrive at a relative chrondogy are based on the relative chronologies of the Śrauta Sūtras. However, such attempts are not valid in every

case. Thus, according to Gonda (1977:603), the links between the AGS and the SGS on the one hand and their respective Śrauta Sūtras on the other is not as close as that between the various parts of the Yajur Vedic kalpa works. Nevertheless, while the evidence for for the chronological position of the Gṛhya Sūtras and the Śrauta Sūtras of the same kalpa may not correspond in every case, a certain similarity is evident in other cases.

The AGS appears to be amongst the oldest of the Gṛhya Sūtras. Thus, R.N.Sharma (1977:14) considers it to be older than the SGS in terms of style and ideas, while Ram Gopal (1983:69) regards it as "considerably older than Pāṇini."

The relative position of the SGS is, however, not so certain. Thus, Ram Gopal (1983:71) considers it to be later than the AGS on account of the fact that its style is laconic and it "lays greater stress on caste distinctions." However, Sehgal (1960:53) considers the SGS to be the oldest Gṛhya Sūtra associated with the Rg Veda on grounds of traces of archaic rituals and linguistic usages.

The position of the ApGS is also uncertain. Thus, there are "considerable differences in style between the śrauta and gṛhya works" (Gonda 1977:591), which may indicate different authorship and would suggest that the Gṛhya Sūtra was probably a later composition. Further, the ApGS is somewhat unique in having a separate mantra-pāṭha section (Praśna 26), unlike the SGS, AGS, and PGS, where the mantras and text are integrated (Oldenberg 1964b:249). Buhler (1965a:xiii) on the other hand suggests that the stylistic differences may be explained in terms of organising the data in the Gṛhya Sūtra and the subsequent Dharma Sūtra (Praśnas 28 and 29 of the Kalpa Sūtra) in such a manner as to avoid repetition and an overlap. Garbe (1902:xii) considers the entire sūtra collection to be the work

of "one and the same author" although he observes that "Āpastamba's style in the Gṛhya Sūtra is much more concise than in the Śrauta Sūtra" (ibid.:xvii). Once again, the possibility of arriving at a definitive conclusion seems remote, and the possibility of the ApGS being later than the ApSS cannot be ruled out.

The PGS is probably amongst the latest of such works. The relatively late date is suggested by the fact that it is an appendix to the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (Oldenberg 1964a:263), which belongs to the latest phase in the composition of the Śrauta Sūtras. Further, "it is well structured, well balanced and written in a lucid style" and "the natural order of subjects is hardly interrupted" (Gonda 1977:601). The text also contains a reference to the six aṅgas of the Vedas (PGS 2.6.6) and as such references are more characteristic of the later Dharma Sūtras than of earlier texts such as the Śrauta Sūtras and the other Gṛhya Sūtras, it may be an indication of a later date.

Finally, as in the case of other categories of literature, some Gṛhya Sūtras show signs of internal stratification. Thus, of the six adhyāyas or chapters of the SGS, the 5th and 6th are regarded as late (Ram Gopal 1983:20, Oldenberg 1964a:9-10), as Nārāyaṇa, the commentator on the text, regards the fifth chapter as an appendix (pariśiṣṭa). Further, the 26th kāṇḍa or section of the first adhyāya is regarded as a kṣepaka or interpolation by the commentator. Unfortunately, studies on the internal stratification of the other Gṛhya Sūtras are not available, though, given the composite nature of such texts, it is quite likely that early and late strata may be discernible in them as well.

From the above, it is evident that most of the Grhya Sūtras would in all likelihood pertain to the period under consideration, though it is possible that some, such as the PGS, pertain to a slightly later period.

V

The compilation of the Dharma Sūtras marks a certain widening in the horizons of the brahmanical tradition, and a shift away from specifically ritual concerns to areas of more general interest. Thus, "whereas...the outlook of the gṛhya compendia is mainly limited to the ritual of their own schools, the dharma works claim to instruct the whole Aryan society" (Gonda 1977:469). They deal with "state" law or vyavahāra, with general behaviour (ācāra) and with penances (prāyaścitta) (Ghoshal 1966a:3). In the section on ācāra, the major concern is with varṇāśrama dharma, i.e., with the rules considered appropriate for the four stages in a man's life and for the four social categories. In fact, "they offer the first systematic exposition of the brahmanical view of the social and political order" (R.S.Sharma 1968:15).

Like the Gṛhya Sūtras, the Dharma Sūtras are based explicitly on smṛti or established tradition (Max Muller 1968:88). The texts are traditionally known as sāmayācārika Dharma Sūtras or smārta Dharma Sūtras, the former title indicating that dharma as expounded in these texts was founded on samayācāra or conventional practice (Ram Gopal 1983:45). However, the Vedas were regarded as the ultimate authority (e.g., GDS 1.1, BDS 1.1.1.1), although this may have been merely symbolic in nature and possibly had little or no practical value (Lingat 1973:8).

The Gṛhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras, apart from their common theoretical basis, display a certain tendency to supplement one another. This is evident in spite of the fact that the Dharma Sūtras deal with a number of issues which were not specific to any particular Vedic caraṇa (Ram Gopal 1983:2). This is particularly marked in the case of the ApGS and the ADS, where the expression yathopadeśam (according to the injunction) is used in both the

texts to refer to one another (Buhler 1965a:xiii). Further, the ApGS does not deal with topics such as the forms of marriage and the duties of the brahmacārin which are normally handled in the Gṛhya Sūtras, as these are examined in detail in the ADS (Kane 1968:55).

Amongst the other Dharma Sūtras, the BDS also contains references to the BGS (Kane 1968:19). It is also interesting to observe that works which do not form part of an extant Kalpa, such as the GDS and the VDS, contain numerous parallels to the Gṛhya Sūtras of the Vedic schools with which they are conventionally associated.

The position of the Dharma Sūtras vis-a-vis the Gṛhya Sūtras is helpful in enabling us to arrive at an absolute chronology for the former. While"parts of the Dharma Sūtras which..... have many themes in common with the gṛhya works may have followed the latter also chronologically, the composition of others was no doubt contemporaneous with texts of that class" (Gonda 1977:471). It is likely that most of these texts pertain to c. 6th-4th centuries B.C., although it is possible that some texts, and parts of other texts, would relate to a later period.

The absolute chronological framework thus assigned is broadly corroborated by the evidence adduced by most scholars. For instance, Max Muller (1968:218) assigns the entire sūtra literautre to c. 600-200 B.C., Drekmeier (1962:35) suggests that Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Āpastamba should be placed between c. 6th and 3rd centuries B.C., and Kane (1968:13) likewise places them between c.600-300 B.C., while Nandi (1977:167) places them between c.5th-4th centuries B.C., and Smith (1958:192) argues for dates ranging between c.500-200 B.C., and Patkar's chronology (1961:55) ranges between 600-100 B.C. The dates assigned to individual texts by Kane (1968) and Buhler (1965) also fall within these limits.

The range of absolute dates are also corroborated by the fact that texts such as the ADS and BDS contain un-Pāṇinian forms (Kane 1968:59). This is true to a lesser extent of the GDS as well (Banerji 1962:19). Besides, Pāṇini's work presupposes the existence of the Dharma Sūtras (Agrawala 1953:460). Hence, it is quite likely that most of these texts would pertain to the period which forms the focus of the study, although the VDS would probably be related to a later phase, and individual sections of the other Dharma Sūtras may be late as well.

If there is a certain degree of consensus about the absolute chronology of the texts, there is very little agreement on their relative chronological position. As in the case of the Gṛhya Sūtras, problems are posed by mutual borrowings in an effort to evolve a common tradition. The major problem centres around the relative position of the GDS and the ADS and a variety of arguments have been adduced to prove the priority of the one over the other.

The arguments for the priority of the GDS have been advanced primarily by Kane (1968:29) and Buhler (1965a:liv). One of the arguments advanced is that Gautama quotes only one predecessor, Manu (21.7) whereas the other authors cite a number of predecessors (Kane 1968:49). However, it may be noted that Gautama cites unnamed predecessors as well (18.8, 18.20), and hence, the absence of references to specific names is by no means conclusive. Further, it is important to examine the context in which authorities are cited, as these are invariably related to what are regarded as controversial issues, which are, to a certain extent, indicative of the relative chronological position. To cite an example, the ADS (1.10.28.1-2) cites two authorities while defining a stena or thief. This would suggest that the concept of private property and its

violation was rather nebulous when the text was composed. It is significant that none of the other Dharma Sūtras show any signs of debate on this issue, treating it as settled.

Kane (1968:34) also considers the GDS to be the earliest on account of the absence of any hostile references to Buddhism. Thus, he cites GDS(3.11) which states that a bhikṣu should stay in one place during the rains, and adds that this reminds him of the vassā of the Buddhist bhikkhu. However, as noted earlier (Section I), references to Buddhism are specific to certain sections of the Dharma Sūtras, and are not very useful for determining either the absolute or the relative chronology of the entire text.

If the arguments for the priority of the GDS are not convincing, the same is true for those relating to the lateness of the ADS. According to Buhler (1965a:xxvii-xxviii), the ADS should be regarded as late as it cites a wide range of texts including the vedānta and the pūrva mīmāṁsā. However, such arguments need not necessarily be valid for the entire text.

Scholars who argue for the priority of the ADS base themselves primarily on socio-economic, stylistic, and linguistic data. Thus, B.K.Ghosh (1927) advances a number of arguments based on the socio-economic data of the texts to argue for the priority of the ADS as opposed to the GDS. The ADS mentions only six forms of marriage as opposed to the eight forms enumerated in the GDS and later texts such as the Manu and Yājñavalkya Smṛtis, omitting the prājāpatya and paiśāca forms. The ADS is also more conservative and condemns the practice of niyoga. According to Ghosh (ibid.)this need not necessarily be a sign of posteriority. Further, there is nothing in the ADS to correspond to the list of inter-varṇa marriages and their offspring found in the GDS. The concept of daṇḍa nīti or the judicial

system is also rather inadequately developed in the ADS, as is the idea of ownership. Likewise, Āpastamba's attitude towards (money) lending is more hostile than that of Gautama. The importance attached to women and śūdras also contrasts with their distinctively subordinate status in the GDS. The ADS is also distinctive in that it does not prohibit beef eating (1.15.17.15). Finally, it does not know any of the places of pilgrimage referred to in the GDS. It is thus evident that the attitude towards social hierarchies is much less rigid than in the GDS. In economic terms, the ADS reflects a certain ambiguity towards the institution of private property, which is explicable in terms of a simpler social system, while in religious or ritual terms also, it appears to reflect an earlier phase.

A further argument in favour of an early date for the ADS is the fact that it contains more archaic and un-Pāṇinian forms than any of the other Dharma Sūtras (Kane 1968:59). Many of these archaic forms are related to Vedic usage (Buhler 1965a:xl), while others bear resemblance to ancient Prakrits (ibid.:xli). As Kane (1968: 70) observes, this would suggest that this work was composed a little before, or immediately after the time of Pāṇini.

It is also noteworthy that the ADS, unlike any other Dharma Sūtra, contains numerous references to Brāhmaṇas. According to B.K.Ghosh (1927:607), this may suggest that the ADS was more closely related to the Brāhmaṇas than the other texts, and hence was possibly earlier. Even stylistically, the ADS resembles the Brāhmaṇas, as opposed to the GDS, where the sūtras are much more compact.

A further argument for a relatively early date for the ADS may be advanced on the ground that it is integral to the Kalpa work. Thus, "there are unmistakeable indications that it is the work of the same author who wrote the remainder of the Kalpa Sutra" (Buhler

1965a:xii-xiii). Hence, it is likely that the ADS is older than the GDS.

The relative position of the BDS is unfortunately more difficult to determine as the text has been subject to more vicissitudes than any of the other works (Lingat 1973:21). Scholars such as Buhler (1965a:xx-xxi) consider the BDS to be older than the ADS, but younger than the GDS. This is partly on account of the fact that the style of the BDS is less concise (Kane 1968:59), it being the work of a pravacanakāra. However, Kane (1968:41) himself suggests that this stylistic difference need not necessarily indicate an earlier origin. Further, according to Buhler (1965a:xviii-xix), the ADS appears to be more conservative than the BDS in the discussion on niyoga and also appears to refute Baudhāyana's ideas concerning inheritance (ibid.:xx). However, stricter rules need not necessarily be later (Kane 1968:50) and according to B.K.Ghosh (1927: 607) it requires "not a small amount of ingenuity to discover" the alleged references to Baudhāyana in the ADS.

Other arguments for the priority of Baudhāyana are based on the tarpana lists which mention Baudhāyana before Āpastamba. However, while the ADS is closely related to the rest of the kalpa, the same cannot be said of the BDS. Hence, the conventional list need not necessarily prove the priority of the BDS over the ADS (Kane 1968:40). Linguistically too, while the language of Baudhāyana is archaic and often departs from the Pāṇinian standard (Kane 1968:44), it is not as archaic as the ADS (ibid.:51). Further, in terms of economic, social, and political data and theories, the BDS is much closer to the GDS than it is to the ADS. This would also suggest a later date for the BDS.

The position of the BDS vis-a-vis the GDS is more definitely established. The BDS (1.1.2.7) cites Gautama as an authority on dharma. Secondly, BDS (3.10) reproduces the 19th chapter of the GDS. Further, as noted above, the GDS and the BDS contain many provisions in common. In view of the above, it seems possible to suggest that while the BDS is later than the GDS, the two texts were probably not far removed in time.

The relative position of the VDS is fortunately less open to dispute. Its language is Sanskrit interspersed with Vedic forms (Buhler 1965b:xxiii), which is more developed than that of the other texts. Further, the text ends by ascribing divine status to the author, Vasiṣṭha (30.11), who is praised as the son of Mitra and Varuṇa and Urvaśī. Such claims to divinity are characteristic of the authors of the later Dharma Śāstras (Banerji 1962:2) but are rather unusual for the Dharma Sūtras. Stylistically, the text contains entire sections in verse, which is reminiscent of the later metrical smṛtis (Buhler 1965b:xxiii). It is also likely that the 22nd chapter of the VDS was borrowed in its entirety from the 19th chapter of the GDS (Banerji 1962:19).

Apart from the stratification of the texts vis-a-vis one another, internal strata belonging to different chronological phases are discernible in some of the texts. According to Buhler (1965b: xxxiv), two major stages of interpolations may be recognised in the BDS, the first when the third praśna was added, and the second when the fourth praśna was added. The third praśna is similar in style and language to the first two, but contains information which is of a supplementary nature. Besides, the tenth chapter appears to have been borrowed from the GDS (Chapter XIX), whilst the sixth chapter resembles the Viṣṇu Smṛti.

The fourth *prasna* treats of penances and of the *siddhis* and *ganahomas*. As Buhler (1965b:xxxiii) observes, the first part is superfluous and repetitive, and contradicts earlier statements, while the section on *siddhi* is not found in any other Dharma Sūtra. Further, there are stylistic and linguistic differences, as this section is composed almost entirely in the *śloka* metre in Purāṇic style (ibid.). Kane (1968:42) also regards this *prasna* as an interpolation. It is important to note that even the first two *prasnas* are not free from interpolations, the section on *tarpana* in the second *prasna* being an example of the same (Buhler 1965b:xxxv). Given the nature of the text, it is obvious that "the greatest caution must be observed in using the BDS for historical purposes" (ibid.).

Earlier and later strata are also discernible in the VDS. Thus, the work on secret penances is the work of a later restorer as it differs from the rest of the text in style and language (Buhler 1965b:xxii). Similarly, Chapters 25 to 28, which consist of *anuṣṭubh ślokas*, are late (ibid.:xxiii). Ram Gopal (1983:58) regards all the later chapters from the 24th onwards as interpolations, although he admits that there are alterations in the earlier sections as well.

It is also likely that the GDS has been subject to interpolations. Thus, the section on mixed castes may be a later addition (Ram Gopal 1983:53), while the law on debt found in the GDS was probably incorporated in Gupta and post-Gupta times (R.S.Sharma 1983b:195).

From the above discussion, it would appear that the Dharma Sūtras would in all likelihood pertain to c. 6th-4th centuries

B.C., with the possibility of some sections of individual texts being considerably later. Further, in terms of relative chronology, it seems possible to argue for the priority of the ADS and the earlier sections of the BDS over the GDS and the VDS.

It is also more than evident from the preceding discussion that the chronological stratification of religious texts is extremely difficult. However, though precise dates are difficult to establish, definite trends can be delineated (Thapar 1984:16-17).

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TABLE I

THE COMPONENTS OF THE PĀRIPLAVA CYCLE

VIŚ	CATEGORY REPRESENTED	DEITY	LORE
Gṛhamedhins	Manuṣyas	Manu Vaivasvata	Ṛg Veda
Sthavīras	Pitṛs	Yama Vaivasvata	Yajur Veda
Yuvāna śobhanā	Gandharvas	Varuṇa Āditya	Atharva Veda
Yuvatayaḥ śobhanā	Apsaras	Soma Vaiśvānara	Āṅgirasa vidyā
Sarpas, sarpavids	Sarpa	Arbuda Kādraveya	Sarpa vidyā
Selagas, pāpakṛtas	Rakṣas	Kuvera Vaiśravaṇa	Rakṣovidyā, devajana vidyā
Kusīdins	Asuras	Asita Dhānvan	Māyā, asura vidyā
Matsya, Matsyahantṛ	Udakacara	Matsya Sāmmada	Itihāsa
Brahmacārins, vayāṁsi, vayovids,	Vayāṁsi	Tārkṣya Vaipsyata	Purāṇas
Śrotriyas	Devas	Dharma Indra	Sāma Veda

TABLE II

THE RATNĪNĀM HAVĪṂSI

RATNINS	DEITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THEM
senānī (6)	Agni
purohita (brāhmaṇa, 1)	Bṛhaspati
yajamāna (rājaṅya,2)	Indra
mahiṣī (3)	Aditi
vāvātā (4)	Bhagā
parivṛktṛ (5)	Nirṛti
sūta (7)	Varuṇa
grāmaṇī (8)	Maruts
kṣattṛ (9)	Savitṛ
saṁgrahitṛ (10)	Aśvins
bhāgadugha (11)	Pūṣan
akṣavāpa (12)	Rudra
govikartṛ	
pālāgala	

Based on the white Yajur Vedic tradition. Variations and ranking in the black Yajur Vedic tradition indicated in brackets.

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Showing the total number of geographical references and the number of references to north Indian features in each text.

TEXT	REFERENCES	NORTH INDIAN	UNIDENTIFIED
PVB	12	11	1
AB	17	11	1
SB	14	14	
AA	3		1
BAU	6	6	
CU	4	3	1
BSS	20	14	4
ASS	5	5	
SSS	12	12	
ApSS	11	11	
BDS	19	9	1
VDS	9	7	

TABLE IV

REFERENCES TO THE NORTH WESTERN REGION

Showing number of geographical references to the west of the Gaṅgā.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURE	NUMBER OF REFERENCES
Yamunā	8
Sarasvatī	7
Kuru	7
Pañcāla	5
Kurukṣetra	5
Dṛṣadvatī	4
Adarśana	3
Plakṣa Prasravana	4
Gandhāra	3
Madra	2
Sindhu Viśaraṇī	2
Sindhu Sauvīra	2
Āraṭṭa	2
Kāmpila	2
Kārāpacavan	3
Khāṇḍava Prastha	2
Parīnah	2
Naitadhanva	2
Triplakṣā	2
Āsandivat	1
Sindhu	1
Surāṣṭra	1
Dvaitavana	1
Paricakra	1
Bisavatya	1
Auṣanas	1

TABLE V

REFERENCES TO THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

Showing the number of references to the middle Gaṅgā Valley

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURE	NUMBER OF REFERENCES
Videha	5
Kosala	4
Gaṅgā	4
Kāśī	4
Naimiṣa	3
Vaiśālī	2
Kālakavana	2
Sadānīrā	1
Kauśāmbī	1
	26

TABLE VI A

THE NORTH WESTERN REGION AND THE SACRIFICE

FEATURE	NUMBER OF REFERENCES	SACRIFICIAL CONTEXT	OTHER
Yamunā	8	6	2
Sarasvatī	7	7	
Kuru	7	4	3
Pañcāla	5	3	2
Kurukṣetra	5	2	3
Dṛṣadvatī	4	4	
Adarśana	3	1	2
Gandhāra	3	1	2
Plakṣa Prasravana	4	4	
Madra	2		2
Sindhu Visaraṇī	2		2
Sindhu Sauvīra	2		2
Āraṭṭas	2		2
Kāmpila	2	2	
Kārāpacavan	3	3	
Khāṇḍavaprastha	2	2	
Pārīnah	2	2	
Naitadhanva	2	2	
Triplakṣā	2	2	
Āsandivat	1	1	
Sindhu	1		1
Surāṣṭra	1		1
Dvaitavana	1	1	
Paricakra	1	1	
Bisavatya	1		1
Auśanas	1		1
Total	74	48	26

TABLE VI B

THE NORTH EASTERN REGION AND THE SACRIFICE

FEATURE	REFERENCES	SACRIFICIAL CONTEXT	OTHER
Videha	5	1	4
Kosala	4	1	3
Gaṅgā	4	2	2
Kāśī	4	1	3
Naimiṣa	3	3	
Kālakavana	2		2
Vaiśālī	2	2	
Sadānīrā	1		1
Kauśāmbī	1		1
Total	26	10	17

TABLE VI C

OTHER AREAS AND THE SACRIFICE

FEATURE	REFERENCES	SACRIFICIAL CONTEXT	OTHER
Puṇḍra	2		2
Vaṅga	2		2
Kaliṅga	2		2
Pāripātram	2		2
Kāraskara	2		2
Vindhya	1		1
Vidarbha	1	1	
Avantī	1		1
Āndhra	1		1
Śabara	1		1
Pulinda	1		1
Dakṣiṇāpatha	1		1
Cerapāda	1		1
Total	19	1	18

TABLE VII A

DISTRIBUTION OF FLORAL REFERENCES

Showing the number of species in each category of flora, and the number of references to these categories.

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF SPECIES	NUMBER OF REFERENCES
A	12 (14.1%)	44 (16%)
B	8 (9.4%)	13 (4.7%)
C	65 (76.5%)	219 (79.2%).

TABLE VII B

TEXT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FLORAL REFERENCES

TEXT	NUMBER OF REFERENCES	A	B	C	D
PVB	9	2	1	6	0
AB	12	4	0	8	0
SB	43	5	2	31	5
AA	4	0	0	4	0
BAU	3	1	0	2	0
CU	7	1	0	6	0
BSS	54	6	2	37	9
ASS	8	2	0	6	0
SSS	22	3	3	13	3
ApSS	33	7	1	24	1
AGS	13	1	1	10	1
PGS	16	3	1	11	1
SGS	24	2	0	17	5
ApGS	16	1	1	10	4
KGS	8	1	0	7	0
ADS	8	1	0	7	0
GDS	9	2	1	6	0
BDS	13	2	0	7	4
VDS	8	0	0	7	1
Total	310	44	13	219	34

TABLE VIII A

COMPARATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FLORAL CATEGORIES

Presenting the data on the categories of flora in terms of a ranked order. Underlined letters indicate no references at all.

TEXT	1	2	3
PVB	C	A	B
AB	C	A	B
SB	C	A	B
AA	C		AB
BAU	CA		B
CU	C	A	B
BSS	C	A	B
ASS	C	A	B
SSS	C	AB	
ApSS	C	A	B
AGS	C	A	B
PGS	C	A	B
SGS	C	A	B
ApGS	C	AB	
KGS	C	A	B
ADS	C	A	B
GDS	CA		B
BDS	C	A	B
VDS	C		AB

TABLE VIII B

Presenting the number of times each category occurs in each position. Figures in brackets indicate no references.

CATEGORY	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
A	2	15	1(1)
B	-	2	16(8)
C	19	-	-

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